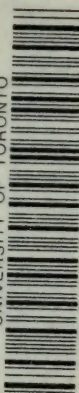



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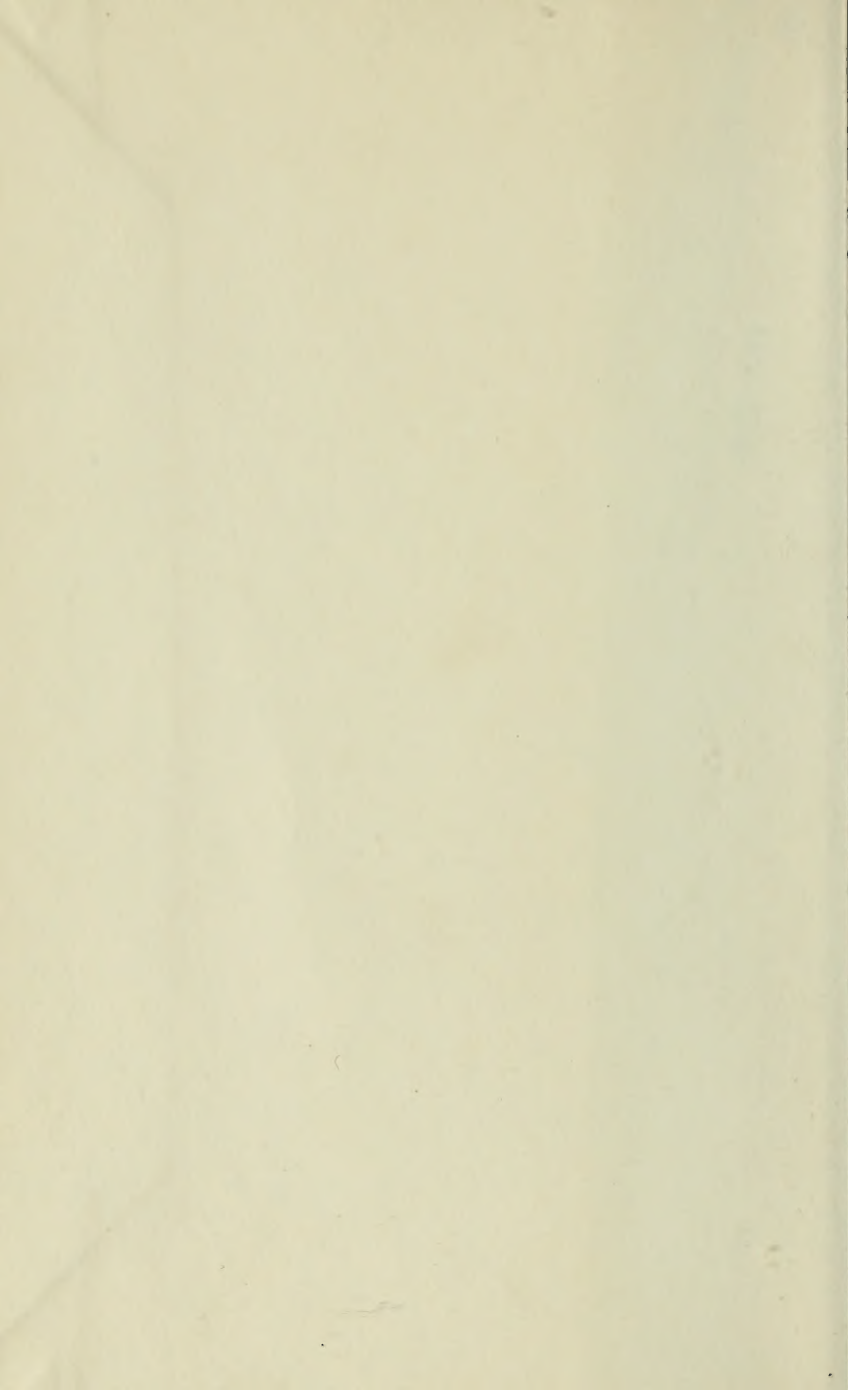


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JOSEPH CHAMBERLAIN.

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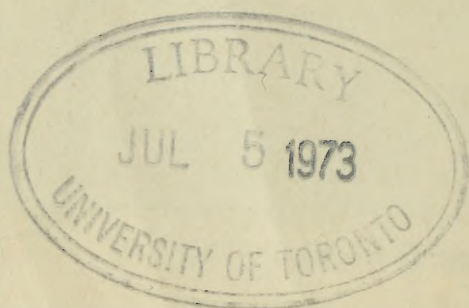


BY

RT. HON. VISCOUNT MILNER, G.C.B., G.C.M.G.  
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## P R E F A C E.

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THIS little book is an attempt to tell the story of the chief events of what is, perhaps, the most striking political career of our day, and to provide a series of studies from different standpoints of the achievements of one who has filled a large place in the life of his country. The standpoints are different, because Mr. Chamberlain's career passed through so many phases. His sympathisers in his early days were later his strongest opponents : some of those who were his colleagues before 1903 were afterwards to be his severest critics. To obtain anything like a full view of his work some sort of symposium is necessary. The various contributors to the volume have very special qualifications for their task. Mr. Spender writes of his career in the Liberal Party as one who himself assisted in his work. Sir Henry Lucy, from his great Parliamentary experience, tells of the part Mr. Chamberlain played in



the dramatic Home Rule struggle of the 'eighties. Mr. Ramsay Macdonald deals with his social policy from the standpoint of the Labour Party. On his most controversial side—his Tariff Reform propaganda—we have the Free Trade Unionist point of view from Mr. Harold Cox, and the appreciation of Mr. L. S. Amery, who writes as a whole-hearted sympathiser. Finally, Lord Milner, who, more than any other British administrator, was associated with Mr. Chamberlain's Imperial policy, discusses his permanent work in the development of the Empire. The moment for a final verdict upon the career of the dead statesman has not yet come, but it is hoped that this collection of studies from so many different standpoints will provide the ordinary reader with some understanding of the magnitude of that career, and with the material for an *interim* judgment. No statesman since Mr. Gladstone's great days has so caught the imagination and enlisted the interest and affection of the average citizen. Mr. Chamberlain, though incapacitated for some years before his death from active political work, remained, and will long remain, one of the great forces in our national life.

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# JOSEPH CHAMBERLAIN :

A SUMMARY OF HIS CAREER.

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## CHAPTER I.

### BIRTH AND SCHOOL DAYS.

JOSEPH CHAMBERLAIN was born at 3 Camberwell Grove, London, on July 8, 1836. His father's family had been settled in the metropolis for several generations ; through his mother he traced a Midland descent from Richard Serjeant, curate of Kidderminster, one of the two thousand ministers ejected from their livings at the Restoration by the Act of Uniformity of 1662. At the time of Joseph's birth the elder Chamberlain was engaged in business in Milk Street as a boot and shoe merchant, and one of the boy's earliest recollections was of dining with the Cordwainer's Company, of which his father

was Master. It was on that occasion, he said, recalling the incident half a century later, "that I made my first public speech."

The records of his early years are scanty. When he was eight years old he spent twelve months at a private school, a stone's throw from his home, and his schoolmistress, Miss Pace, remembered him, fifty years later, as a boy of a serious disposition. Two characteristics, to be noted at all stages of his career, were already marked—a distaste for athletic exercise, and a love of pre-eminence among his fellows. One feels that the anecdote of the Peace Society, for the Presidentship of which the youthful Joseph Chamberlain fought vigorously with his fists, is well attested by the fighter's subsequent career. Mr. Chamberlain recalled the Society in later days as a charitable society, which had a total capital of  $5\frac{1}{2}$ d., of which, by the accident of fortune, he was able to contribute four-fifths—a fourpenny bit given him by his uncle. The Peace Society had a brief career. The members debated what should be done with the  $5\frac{1}{2}$ d., and after it had been decided to hand it over to a crossing-sweeper in the neighbourhood of the school, and the decision had been carried out, the Society came to an end.



When his mother brought her son to Miss Pace she asked that he should not be taught anything light or frivolous. The early Victorian school-book made the carrying out of this injunction easy. If the *Guide to Knowledge*, *Little Arthur's History of England*, or *Geography*, by "A Lady," erred in any way, it was not in the direction of lightness and frivolity. *Line upon Line* was one of the volumes studied at the school, and upon one occasion Miss Pace discovered her scholars, fresh from the reading of "Priests of Baal," crouching in the playground before a clay daub they had erected on the wall in the attitude demonstrated in the picture accompanying the lesson. Amongst the worshippers was the future Minister. Mr. Chamberlain may have owed something in future days to the fact that Miss Pace made it her particular care that her pupils read and spoke distinctly.

In 1845 the Chamberlains moved to North London, and took up their abode in the suburb of Highbury. Joseph was removed from Miss Pace's and sent to a second school in Canonbury Square. The headmaster of this was a clergyman of the Church of England, the Rev. Arthur Johnson, to whose considerable force of character his distinguished pupil confessed in

after years he was much indebted. The boy remained under Mr. Johnson's care till he was fourteen, when his master frankly informed his father that it was time he went elsewhere, as his knowledge of mathematics was at least quite equal to that of his preceptor. Accordingly, in 1850, Joseph was enrolled as a pupil at University College, Gower Street, a place of instruction much in favour with Unitarians, as providing a non-sectarian education of public school standard. Richard and Arthur, his brothers, were also entered as pupils at the same time as Joseph, who was now able to develop his mathematical bent. He did so to such purpose that at the end of the two years which he spent at this institution he was the dux mathematical scholar. He distinguished himself also in French, being bracketed first with Jules Benedict, and a taste for applied science seems revealed in the high place he took in the mechanics and hydrostatics class, where he was also bracketed first.

The traits noted at Miss Pace's reappeared in the playground at University College—the masterfulness, and the dislike of games. It is a combination which does not make for popularity in an English playground, and Joseph's more easy-going brother Richard had a greater

share of their schoolfellows' favour. Amongst those schoolfellows were Sir Michael Foster, who in later days was to represent London University in Parliament, and whose services to physiology were to be recognized by his appointment to the Presidentship of the British Association; and Mr. J. W. Mellor, a future Chairman of Committees in the House of Commons. Mr. Gully, the predecessor of Mr. Lowther in the office of Speaker, had just passed through the school; Mr. Morley entered it just after Mr. Chamberlain left. In November 1902, Mr. Chamberlain, as Colonial Secretary, unveiled a memorial to the boys of his old school who had fallen in the South African war, and took occasion to give many pleasant reminiscences of his old masters.

Oxford and Cambridge had not yet opened their doors to the Dissenter, so that the elder Chamberlain was debarred from offering his sons the benefits of their wider education. It was decided that Joseph should learn the business of cordwaining, which had been carried on in the house in Milk Street for three generations, and the dux mathematical scholar of University College found himself working side by side with a band of Radical shoemakers. They nurtured in him the love of political discussion, and

claimed his sympathies for the lot of the working classes, whose grievances they laid bare with their rough eloquence. Holidays the "serious" young man spent, as often as not, at the recently-opened Polytechnic, where he attended as many scientific lectures as he could find, "Pepper's Ghost" and descents in the diving bell providing entertainment for the unoccupied intervals. It was at this period that Joseph discovered a talent for amateur theatricals, and became accounted a tolerable actor. Nay, he even wrote a play, a one-act production entitled *Who's Who*, in which he himself took the part of a Frenchman. The family life at Highbury was notable for the strength of the affection which united the members of the household. But it was not long before the circle was to be broken by the demands of the years. In 1854, Mr. Chamberlain's father was induced by his brother-in-law, Mr. Joseph Nettlefold, to invest a sum of money in an American patent for wood screws, of which the Nettlefold firm had bought the English rights. To carry out the work of developing the patent, a son from each house was sent to Birmingham, and thus it was that Joseph Chamberlain came to the city of his adoption.



## CHAPTER II.

## BUSINESS LIFE IN BIRMINGHAM.

FROM the first his Birmingham life was strenuous. America, Germany, France, and Russia had for their respective countries the rights of the patent the new firm had been established to work, and the future of the enterprise was dependent upon the initiative and energy the young partners might show. But Mr. Chamberlain was never found lacking in either of these qualities, and Nettlefolds by degrees emerged as one of the leading firms of the world in the industry. At the outset the two young men set themselves to discover whether in certain markets, so far closed to them, it might not be possible, by observing the special conditions carefully, to secure an entry. There is a story told in this connection which indicates that the future Colonial Secretary had already discovered how much can be done by a concession which, valued by the receiver, demands little of the giver beyond perception of its acceptableness. A very small trade was done by Nettlefolds with France. Proceeding to investigate the detail of the firm's



transactions with the Continent, Mr. Chamberlain found that, like other British manufacturers, they described their goods in terms of the English system of weights and measures. The Continental consumer of English wood screws was thus met at the outset by a needless barrier which it was possible, by taking a little trouble, to remove. Pursuing his inquiries further, Mr. Chamberlain noted that it was a custom of the trade in France to wrap the screws in little packets, each of which was enclosed in a roll of blue paper. Having marked these things, he issued two instructions—that henceforth in the case of those countries which employed the decimal system, that system should be used to describe the goods of the firm ; and that in the case of France the screws should be made up in the manner employed by French manufacturers, and sent out in the blue paper with which the French buyer associated the commodity. The instructions were carried out, and the result was that Nettlefolds developed a considerable trade with France.

Besides thus occupying himself with the minutæ of distribution, Mr. Chamberlain studied carefully the conditions of his workpeople. He set on foot, in connection with the firm's works at Smethwick, a club and a night school. Con-

nected with the club was a debating society, at which the founder was a regular attender, and at which he learned still more, at first-hand, of the politics of the artisan. In the night school—(it should be noted that night schools and adult schools were in those days the sole means by which the working-men of Birmingham could increase their knowledge)—Mr. Chamberlain taught personally several subjects, including English and French history, and English literature. It is worth while noting that at this period of Mr. Chamberlain's life a Frenchman breakfasted with him daily, so that he might be able to acquire a practical workaday knowledge of the language, as well as a theoretical. The zeal he showed for their welfare, and a personal sympathy he manifested with their needs, earned him the loyal affection of his workpeople; and many years later, when he was in America on a political mission, a number of working-men made themselves known to him, and offered him their thanks for the helping hand he had held out to them in those early days.

The screw trade grew and expanded to such an extent, and those engaged in it cut prices so keenly in their effort to capture trade, that in time the general position of matters in the in-

dustry became exceedingly serious. At length, in 1870, the firm of Nettlefolds, with a view to relieving the fierce competition which existed, entered into negotiations with several of the largest firms in the trade, for the purpose of arranging for the purchase and amalgamation of their businesses. The purchases arranged were carried out on liberal terms, and the expedient effected its purpose. Rumours were current for some years after Mr. Chamberlain entered politics to the effect that he had deliberately crushed his opponents to secure a monopoly for the Nettlefold firm. It was categorically stated in some quarters that he had addressed a threatening circular to the small manufacturers demanding submission, on pain of extinction by a less pleasant method than purchase. The matter was brought prominently before the public in 1884, when, in the columns of the *Daily News*, Mr. H. R. Grenfell specifically alleged that the President of the Board of Trade, as Mr. Chamberlain then was, had made a large fortune in money secured by "most questionable dodges." A day or two later, the Vicar of Rugeley, the Rev. R. M. Grier, wrote to the *Daily News* that he had formerly entertained rumours of such statements as Mr. Grenfell's, but that, being chal-

lenged on one occasion, he had been led to make inquiries, with the result that he was unable to discover a single extant copy of the circular alleged to have been sent out by the Nettlefold firm. All that could be said against Mr. Chamberlain was that other firms had suffered indirectly through Nettlefolds' success. Mr. Grenfell upon this wrote a second letter to the *Daily News*, regretting that he had given currency to rumours of Mr. Chamberlain "calculated to convey an erroneous impression as to the source of his fortune." A few days afterwards a letter appeared in the journal from Messrs. A. Stokes and Company, one of the concerns not absorbed by the Nettlefolds, in which the firm expressed themselves indebted to the action taken by Mr. Chamberlain, as having revived a declining trade. Messrs. Stokes in the letter bore testimony to the liberality of the offer of purchase made in their own case, and to the honourable manner in which negotiations were conducted, and they added further that the industry owed more than a little to Nettlefolds for the energetic manner in which that firm had competed with makers on the Continent, and upheld the standard of the British manufacturer. All reports as to threats to crush out small makers were, they



added, false and absurd, and must be made by persons ignorant of the facts, or wilfully malicious.

Mr. Chamberlain's business life lasted twenty years. He retired from Nettlefolds in 1874. Seven years after he came to Birmingham he married Harriet, daughter of Mr. Archibald Kenrick, who became the mother of his son Austen. She died shortly after his birth in 1863. Six years afterwards Mr. Chamberlain married Florence Kenrick, her cousin.

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### CHAPTER III.

#### TRAINING FOR PUBLIC WORK.

ALREADY we have seen that the mind of the cordwainer's son had been turned to politics by the discussions of the Radical shoemakers of Milk Street. One of the first things he did when he came to Birmingham was to join the Birmingham and Edgbaston Debating Society (as it was entitled a month or two later), and he spoke on the first night. The subject of debate was the proposition, "That the character and conduct of Cromwell do not



entitle him to the admiration of posterity," and the newly-elected member spoke vigorously against the proposition. The society, of course, took the closest interest in politics, and Mr. Chamberlain's earliest prominent appearance in connection with it was political. Even in those days it would seem he set ideas before men, and was prepared to face inevitable charges of iconoclasm, for the task he undertook was no less than to move a resolution strongly condemning the "principles enunciated in the speeches recently made by Mr. Bright in Birmingham, and also the spirit in which those speeches were delivered." It may be significant to note, in the light of later years, that the cause of the youthful Radical's displeasure with the great Tribune was that he had, in the speeches referred to, cold-shouldered the Colonies, speaking of them as a drain and a burden. For two evenings the battle raged over the resolution, and although it was ultimately defeated, it was only by one vote. Among other points on which the young Birmingham politician broke a lance with the distinguished representative of the constituency on the occasion was the question to whose account were to be laid the wars in which a nation engaged. Mr. Bright had made the

aristocracy the scapegoat ; his young critic contended that every war that had been entered upon by the country since the revolution of 1688 must be laid to the charge of the people.

His connection with the society lasted nine years, and he filled the various offices in turn, being successively treasurer, secretary, vice-president, and president. While he was in the secretarial chair he endeavoured to obtain permission for the society to form a corps of volunteers out of its own ranks, and a letter is still extant in the archives, in which is expressed a dignified regret that the opportunity of gaining an excellent corps was not taken advantage of by the public department which had it in its power to accept the society's offer.

Gradually and steadily the training for public work went on. At first Mr. Chamberlain committed his speeches to memory with care, but gradually the rough and tumble of debate generated fluency and freedom. As always, he spoke with clearness, but his delivery was for some time laboured. Eleven years after he came to Birmingham the now famous and powerful Liberal Association was formed, with a view to aiding Mr. Bright and those who supported him in the agitation for franchise reform. At its first institution the composition

of the new body was unsatisfactory ; but three years later, in 1868, the Association was reconstituted, with Francis Schnadhorst, the future organizing chief of the Liberal Party, as its secretary, and Mr. Chamberlain as one of its most prominent members. Under the scheme of the Association as newly constituted, each ward in Birmingham elected its own committee, which appointed three representatives to the executive, and twenty-four to the general committee of the Association. A management committee received suggestions, and prepared the business for the general committee. Originally the general committee was of small dimension, but its numbers had to be increased as the constituency grew. From the "Four Hundred" it became the "Six Hundred," and from the "Six Hundred" the "Two Thousand." The power of the new organization was soon to be demonstrated. At the 1868 election, in spite of the working of the minority clause, it returned the three Liberal candidates—Bright, Dixon, and Muntz. It was currently described as the "Vote-as-you're-told-Committee ;" but it set as little store by abusive epithets as did Mr. Chamberlain.

It was under the auspices of the Liberal Association that Mr. Chamberlain made his first

prominent public appearance. Incensed at the refusal of the House of Lords, which declined to accept the Irish Church Bill on the score that the feeling of the country on the question had not as yet been fully obtained, the Association convened a meeting in the Town Hall to discuss the situation. One may doubt whether any public speaker has had a more stormy *début*. The Mayor presided over an audience which included vociferous representatives of both parties. The "general idea," to borrow a phrase from the strategists, was that both sides were to be given a hearing ; but the howling audience would listen to neither. Mr. Chamberlain spoke amid a "storm of cheers, counter-cheers, and interruptions." It was a trying ordeal, but he faced the uproar with his usual self-possession, and the report of his speech shows that he kept closely to the point—the reason of the Lords' delay. The tumult grew from bad to worse. The Mayor, a weak man, could not get a hearing for himself, much less for others, and ultimately after Mr. Sampson Lloyd, one of the Conservative candidates at the recent election, had for over an hour and a half endeavoured in vain to obtain a hearing, the crowd surged upon the platform, irate politicians shook their fists angrily in the Mayor's face, and in



general there arose a scene of turbulence unequalled in the annals of a noisy hall. The "stormy petrel" had fit baptism.

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## CHAPTER IV.

### MUNICIPAL AND EDUCATIONAL WORK.

IT was in this year, 1869, that Mr. Chamberlain entered municipal life in Birmingham. He was returned unopposed, and *in absentia*, for the ward of St. Paul's—a testimony to the prestige he had already attained among the people of the Midland capital. He threw himself into the new work with vigour. Finding few among the members of the Council who sympathized with the ideals with which he himself was imbued, he set himself to increase that number. He preached diligently among his friends the dignity of municipal service, and the opportunities offered by the work of local government, and at the end of four years the "Reform Party," as the new force dubbed itself, were able not only to contest every seat, but to win the majority. Their first act upon taking office was to elect as Mayor the man who had inspired them.

His occupancy of the Mayoral chair was notable in many ways. Birmingham's sons alone can fully appreciate the work accomplished under his *régime* ; but a survey of the mere outline is sufficient to demonstrate his title to a high place in the annals of municipal service and achievement. He was three years in office—a triple extension of the usual term. In the first year he carried out a scheme of purchase by which the gas undertakings of Birmingham were bought out, and the supply became municipal ; in the second he came to terms with the water companies, and municipalized the water supply ; and in the third he persuaded the ratepayers to enter upon a great scheme of improvement, as the result of which a slum area in the town's centre was swept away, to give place to the Corporation Street of to-day. The purchase of the gas companies involved the expenditure of nearly two millions ; but the profits of the first half year amounted to £25,000 ; whilst by 1884 the water undertaking had provided for all its liabilities, and substantially reduced the rate. At the ratepayers' meeting called to discuss the gas proposals, some scepticism was expressed as to the advantageousness of the offer of the companies. “ Would you give that for it ? ” an opponent inquired

of Mr. Chamberlain. "I would," was the reply. "If the Corporation will take the offer and farm it out to me, I will pay them £20,000 a year for it, and at the end of fourteen years I shall have a snug little fortune of £180,000 to £200,000." The opposition was silenced. Another of the events associated with his term of office was the laying of the corner-stone of the new Council House in June 1874, when the scattered municipal departments were brought together and worthily housed under one roof.

In November 1874, the Prince and Princess of Wales visited Birmingham, and were entertained by Mr. Chamberlain as Mayor. His publicly-expressed sympathy with republicanism concentrated public attention on the event; but probably the most notable feature of the occasion was the admirable manner in which the Mayor discharged his duty as host, in name of the town, of the illustrious visitors. *Punch* wrote that the Mayor

"Put his red cap in his pocket and sat on his 'Fortnightly' article,  
And of red republican claws and teeth displayed not so much as a particle,"

in receiving the royal visitors, and his speech in proposing their health was described by the *Times* as being couched in a tone of "courteous

homage, manly independence, and gentlemanly feeling." The imputation of the possibility of public ungentlemanliness on his part was bitterly resented by Mr. Chamberlain.

Concurrently, but also for some years prior to taking up municipal work, Mr. Chamberlain espoused with ardour the cause of educational reform. He took part in the formation of the Birmingham Education Society in 1867 for the purpose of collecting funds to provide additional school accommodation, and to pay the fees of children who were denied education through lack of money on the part of their parents, and he became Chairman of the Executive Council of the National Education League, which arose out of the society, and carried on a vigorous reform propaganda. At the first conference of the League he spoke in strong advocacy of a system of education which should be compulsory, and, when the aid of local rates was invoked, free, un-sectarian, and controlled by the local authority. A Bill was prepared by the League embodying these views, but was not introduced in view of Mr. Forster's forthcoming Act. With the line there taken in regard to denominational education the League was naturally ill-content; but Mr. Chamberlain, at a meeting called to discuss the Bill, stood out against the adoption of



a hostile attitude, expressing his faith in the fairness of the Ministry. School Boards came into existence as one result of the 1870 Act, and Mr. Chamberlain was elected a member of the Board in Birmingham. For the first three years the undenominationalists were in a minority, numbering six; but, as the denomination-  
alists found, they exercised unceasing vigilance, and were always to be reckoned with. In 1876 the advent of Miss Sturge and Mr. Jesse Collings to the Board reversed the positions, and Mr. Chamberlain was elected to the chair. By this time the discontent of the League at the manner in which Mr. Forster's Act was being carried out had grown to a high pitch. They sent deputations to wait upon Mr. Gladstone and Mr. Forster, but without avail, and at one time secession from the Liberal party was contemplated, with a view to running candidates specially pledged to work for the repeal of the clause in the Act which empowered School Boards to pay fees to denominational schools in cases of poverty. Less extreme counsels prevailed, however, and the League contented itself with a propagandist campaign, in which Dr. Dale and Mr. Chamberlain were conspicuous, throughout England and Scotland, with the result that 300 out of 425 Liberal candidates

pledged themselves to undertake the task of repeal. In this same election the Mayor of Birmingham was invited to stand as an advanced Liberal at Sheffield. The invitation to stand as candidate was consequent upon the publication in the *Fortnightly Review* (between the editor of which, Mr. Morley, and Mr. Chamberlain a strong friendship had developed) of an article which contained the first of Mr. Chamberlain's "programmes"—"Free Labour, Free Land, Free Church, Free Schools." He was unsuccessful, being defeated by Mr. Roebuck by a thousand votes. Two years later, however, in June 1876, a vacancy occurring through the retirement, owing to the ill-health of his wife, of Mr. George Dixon, he was elected junior member for Birmingham without a contest.

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## CHAPTER V.

### RADICAL MEMBER AND MINISTER.

TWO months later, on August 4, 1876, he spoke in the Assembly. The intervention was unusually early, but the subject was one with which the junior member for Birming-

ham had been prominently identified, and he felt it would hardly be honest if he remained silent. The clearness and cogency of his remarks elicited from Mr. Forster, of whom, as the champion of the League, the new member had said a good many hard things, a generous tribute. The Minister congratulated the newcomer upon the remarkable ability with which he had realized the expectations of many members of the House. Mr. Disraeli also referred to the speaker, whose reputation had preceded him. Early in the following session Mr. Chamberlain spoke again on the Prisons Bill, championing the cause of local government, the dignity of which, he argued, was affected by the proposal to transfer the control of prisons from the local authorities to the State. His first set speech in the House was on the question of the municipalization of the liquor traffic. In company with Mr. Jesse Collings, he had made a pilgrimage to Sweden and Lapland during the recess, and had been impressed by the working of the Gothenburg system. He became convinced that a great step towards the solution of the drink problem would be taken if municipalities were to secure from Parliament power to buy up licensed premises in their areas. Accordingly, on his return to England, he ad-

dressed a meeting of the "Six Hundred," propounding this solution of the question ; raised the matter in the Town Council, where he still kept a seat ; and upon the reassembling of Parliament, taking the question to the House of Commons, he moved a resolution to grant municipalities such power. The speech in which he moved the resolution was of a type which, accompanied by anything like good delivery, is specially calculated to hold the attention and to win the approval of the House of Commons. It presented forcibly and lucidly the results of a first-hand observation of the working of a system which the speaker advocated. "Before he had spoken twenty sentences," an independent member wrote to the *Birmingham Daily Post*, "Mr. Gladstone leaned forward to see and hear the speaker, Cross (the Home Secretary) took notes, and Sir Stafford (Sir S. Northcote) was drawn into a sitting position. There were no epigrams, no personalities, no desperate attempts to be funny. It was a calm, serious argument, leading to a logical and level conclusion . . . the work of a man who felt the subject too important for wit and laughter." It is interesting to note, in the light of innumerable future cartoons, that the writer of these sentences earnestly counselled Mr. Chamberlain



to avoid, in any subsequent utterances, obscuring his eyes by the use of an eye-glass.

Nine months after Mr. Chamberlain entered the House Mr. Gladstone paid his first political visit to Birmingham. The reason of the visit was chiefly that a movement had been initiated by the Birmingham Association to perfect Liberal organization by uniting the various associations throughout the country in a federation. Mr. Gladstone and Mr. Chamberlain addressed a meeting of thirty thousand people in the Bingley Hall, the Liberal leader speaking on the Eastern question, while Mr. Chamberlain proposed the resolution of federation, by which machinery was to be provided to give the "opinion of the people full and direct expression in framing and supporting the policy of the Liberal Party." The recognition thus given to the Birmingham Association, of which Mr. Chamberlain was the acknowledged head, naturally added to his prestige, both in Parliament and in the country.

In 1880, Lord Beaconsfield dissolved Parliament; the new organization was fully tested, and approved itself a notable party asset. It entered into the fight in sixty-seven constituencies, and won sixty out of the sixty-seven. In Birmingham itself Mr. Bright, Mr. Chamber-

lain, and Mr. Muntz were returned. The elections resulted in a sweeping victory for the Liberals, the state of parties at the close being : Conservatives, 243 ; Irish Nationalists, 60 ; Liberals, 349. It became necessary for Mr. Gladstone, in order to retain the support of the Radicals, who had proved themselves valuable allies, to give them a spokesman in the Cabinet. Two possible candidates for the honour were suggested—Sir Charles Dilke and Mr. Chamberlain. The former stood aside in favour of the member for Birmingham. In four years from his entering the walls of St. Stephen's Mr. Chamberlain had attained Cabinet rank.

He went, as Mr. Bright had done, to the Board of Trade, and he declared to his constituents that he liked the office that had been conferred upon him. It offered him scope for the administrative ability and the grasp of detail of which we have already seen some evidence in his business career. In the House itself also he was active, passing some measures and introducing others. Included in the former category were a Grain Cargoes Act, and an Act dealing with seamen's wages ; a Bankruptcy Act, which sought to checkmate more effectively fraudulent insolvency ; and a Patents Act, which brought about a reduction in the cost

of taking out patents. On the other hand, his Merchant Shipping Bill, although it had the excellent object of rendering unprofitable the practice of sending men to sea in unseaworthy ships, aroused, for a variety of reasons, the strong opposition of the shipowning classes, received only lukewarm support from the Government, and was ultimately withdrawn. The Minister offered to resign in consequence, and to carry the matter to the constituencies ; but Mr. Gladstone persuaded his young colleague to retain his position.

The time, however, was not greatly distant when Mr. Chamberlain was to press his resignation on his chief. The Irish question arose in a doubly acute form—outrage in Ireland and obstruction in the House of Commons. In 1881, Mr. Parnell and other leaders of the Land League were arrested and imprisoned at Kilmainham ; but the disorder grew worse than before. The Government decided to try conciliatory measures, and Mr. Parnell and his friends were released unconditionally. As the result of subsequent negotiations, Captain O'Shea, Chief Whip of the Irish Party, wrote to Mr. Chamberlain and to Mr. Gladstone a letter (which became the basis of what was currently referred to as the " Kilmainham Treaty ") which

contained a plan of conciliation and a programme which would "enable the Irish Party to co-operate cordially for the future with the Liberal Party in forwarding Liberal principles and measures of general reform." But the Phoenix Park murders changed the whole situation, and for the time being Coercion became inevitable. The Irish Party revenged themselves in June 1895, by voting against the Government on Sir Michael Hicks-Beach's resolution condemning the Budget proposals, and Mr. Parnell's demands became more extensive than ever. He asked no longer for remedial measures or subsidiary reforms, but for a separate and independent Parliament, sitting in Dublin, and he offered his own and his colleagues' allegiance to the party which would grant his demand. Mr. Chamberlain frankly refused to enter into competition for the allegiance which the Irish leader offered upon the new terms; but Mr. Gladstone was won over to lend an ear to wider proposals than had hitherto been contemplated. Lord Salisbury, who took office as the result of the June defeat, was defeated on the Address, nominally on "Three Acres and a Cow," but in reality on the Irish question, and in February 1886, Mr. Gladstone was once more in office. With some difficulty he per-



suaded Mr. Chamberlain, whose anxiety as to his leader's position on the Irish question had increased, to accept a seat in the Cabinet, as President of the Local Government Board. In taking office Mr. Chamberlain freely expressed his doubts as to the possibility of being able to continue to support the Ministry, and demanded unfettered freedom of action. When Mr. Gladstone placed his new plan of Home Rule before the Cabinet, Mr. Chamberlain tendered his resignation, which was accepted. The Bill, he wrote, was tantamount to a proposal for Separation, and was even worse, as it would have the effect of setting up an unstable and temporary form of government which would be a source of perpetual irritation and agitation until the full demands of the Nationalist Party were conceded.

In the new situation the Radical leader took counsel with Lord Hartington, who, in company with Mr. Goschen and sixteen other Liberals, had voted against their party on the Address, on the "Three Acres and a Cow" amendment. As the result of meetings at the House of the two malcontents, it was agreed, as a preliminary step, to oppose the Second Reading of the Bill. It should be noted that the Irish question by no means exhausted Mr.

Chamberlain's activities during this period. During 1885 he undertook a prolonged electioneering campaign in Scotland in advocacy of what was described as the "unauthorized programme." The items of this were free schools, small holdings, graduation of taxation, and local government. In the course of his presentation of the programme to the country he made at Birmingham what was known as the "Ransom" speech—in which he asked the question what ransom property was prepared to pay for the security it enjoyed. So far as there was any answer it showed itself in a diminished enthusiasm for the programme.

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## CHAPTER VI.

### IN THE UNIONIST RANKS.

FOR a time there was a possibility that the breach between Mr. Chamberlain and Mr. Gladstone would be healed by concessions; but the possibility gradually disappeared, and, from deciding to oppose the Bill on its Second Reading—that is, on the principle—Mr. Chamberlain and Lord Harting-

ton, with their supporters, came to the determination that the measure must be resisted throughout. The Second Reading was taken on June 7, and lost by thirty votes. In the election which followed, the National Liberal Federation supported Mr. Gladstone, but the Birmingham Association, as ever, remained loyal to its personal head, and the two of the seven Birmingham members who stood as Home Rulers suffered defeat. The National Radical Union was now formed, and adopted a Devolution platform. A few months after the new Government were returned to power the resignation of Lord Randolph Churchill led to a public expression by Mr. Chamberlain of a fear that the old Tory influences might gain the upper hand, and of his willingness to take part in a Round Table Conference of the Liberal leaders on the Home Rule question, which alone, he declared, divided himself and his supporters from their old allies. In accordance with the suggestion, he and Sir George Trevelyan on the one hand, and Mr. Morley and Sir William Harcourt on the other, met and discussed the situation, but without arriving at any basis of mutual agreement. The "Plan of Campaign" led to the passing and vigorous enforcement of the Crimes Act. In August 1887, by which time matters had

quieted down, the Government passed an Irish Land Act, in which the principle of the revision of judicial rents was conceded by the Conservatives to their Radical allies, a principle, Mr. Chamberlain declared, more Radical than any which had ever been put before the British House of Commons. Mr. Chamberlain attempted further to secure the insertion of a clause entitling the Land Court to make a composition, if that was thought necessary and just, of all the tenant's debts, so that he might not, owing to arrears, be left on the land in a state of hopeless insolvency. The proposal was supported by Sir William Harcourt ; but the Irish party would have none of it. In October of this year Mr. Chamberlain visited Ulster, and spoke on Home Rule and Unionist Irish policy.

Recognition of the new ally was further made by the Government in the appointment, in October 1887, of Mr. Chamberlain as the colleague of Sir Lionel Sackville West and Sir Martin Tupper to proceed to adjust a long-standing controversy between Great Britain and the United States with respect to the fisheries off the coasts of Canada and Newfoundland. A Treaty was arranged between the plenipotentiaries of the two countries, in granting American fishing-vessels access to these



coasts for wood, water, shelter, and repairs, with the acquirement of the additional privileges of buying bait and stores, transshipment of catch and shipping crews, when the United States should join Canada in free trade in fish and oil. As a *modus vivendi* it was arranged, by means of a protocol added by the British representatives, that the terms of the Treaty should be immediately available for American vessels on a yearly payment of  $1\frac{1}{2}$  dollars per ton for two years. As it happened, the United States declined to ratify the Treaty, but the American fishermen having attained their desires at a nominal cost by the *modus vivendi*, all dispute ceased, a state of affairs found to be so agreeable that the protocol continued to be extended from year to year. It was during his visit to America that Mr. Chamberlain, at the house of Mr. W. C. Endicott, Minister of War in President Cleveland's first administration, met Miss Mary Endicott, who in 1888 became his wife.

The Unionist Parliament was dissolved in 1892, and Mr. Gladstone once more took office. In the new Parliament the Unionists numbered 315, the Liberals 274, whilst there were 81 Irish members. The Government were, therefore, dependent for their existence on the support of the Irish. On February 13, in a crowded House

of Commons, Mr. Gladstone introduced the Second Home Rule Bill. Mr. Chamberlain interposed in the debate five days later, declaring that Irish policy was controlled by Ireland's geographical position, that the Bill could only be regarded as a preliminary to Separation, and would not settle the Irish grievance. In the stormy session which followed (a session in which there occurred in the House a *mélée* without parallel in British Parliamentary annals), the two figures of the aged Premier and the bitter and unsparing antagonist who had formerly been his colleague stand out sharp and distinct. Mr. Chamberlain put forward every effort to bring about the defeat of the measure. The Bill was read a third time by the House of Commons, but was thrown out by the Upper Chamber after a four days' debate by 419 votes to 41. In the midst of the inevitably painful duel between the two men occurred one of those rare incidents which serve to humanize British politics. Amongst the members of the new Parliament was Mr. Austen Chamberlain, who in April interposed during one of the debates on the Irish question. Mr. Gladstone, replying on the particular matter, declared that the issue had been evaded by the speakers, with the exception of one, the hon. member for East

Worcester, whose speech must have been "dear and refreshing to a father's heart."

In March 1894, Mr. Gladstone resigned office, and fifteen months later the Government were defeated on cordite. Mr. Chamberlain's pen was busy during this period of his life. In the *Nineteenth Century*, in 1890, he wrote on the question of the "Americanizing" of British municipal institutions, and two years later, in the *Forum*, he compared the municipal institutions of the two countries. He discussed State Socialism in its favourable aspects in a third article, and Old Age Pensions in a fourth; whilst a fifth was devoted to the Labour question.

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## CHAPTER VII.

### COLONIAL SECRETARY.

THE elections gave the Unionist Party a three-figure majority—152—and Lord Salisbury proceeded to construct a Cabinet. He reserved in it several places for his Liberal Unionist allies. Mr. Chamberlain was offered, and accepted, the portfolio of the Colonies, whilst Mr. Jesse Collings, Mr. Powell Williams,

and Mr. Auston Chamberlain also received appointments in the administration. Henceforth Mr. Chamberlain is mainly identified with the cause of Empire ; but he played a by no means inconsiderable part in Unionist social legislation. During the previous tenure of office of the Unionist party the Free Education Act had, naturally, his whole-hearted support ; and in the new Parliament he was prominent in his advocacy of the Workmen's Compensation Act of Sir M. White Ridley. Indeed, an Opposition organ described him at this period as " devil-ling " for Sir Matthew—" arbitrating, conciliating, reconciling warring interests, and stamping the whole proceedings in the House with the spirit of clear and precise bargaining which has always been Mr. Chamberlain's note in politics." Further, he introduced in 1889 a Bill for the Acquisition of Small Houses, which empowered municipalities to advance four-fifths of a maximum sum of £300 so long as a penny rate was not exceeded, to enable workmen to become freeholders of their own houses. His share in the passing of Unionist Irish legislation may also be noted. He acted, further, as the spokesman of the Government on the subject of Old Age Pensions, intimating their assent to the appointment of a Select Committee on Mr. Holland's Bill.



The Liberal Unionist Conference in the same year placed Old Age Pensions in the forefront of the measures to be taken up by the Government. But events in more distant lands were to put an end for the moment to schemes of domestic reform. Eighteen months after Mr. Chamberlain went to the Colonial Office occurred what is known to history as the Jameson Raid. The Colonial Secretary, spending the New Year at Highbury, was informed that a telegram had arrived at the Colonial Office with the news that Dr. Jameson, the Administrator of Mashonaland, had crossed the Transvaal border, and was marching to Pretoria or Johannesburg. Mr. Chamberlain telegraphed peremptory instructions to Sir Hercules Robinson, the British Commissioner in South Africa, to stop the raiders, and left Birmingham for London by the night mail. The message was ignored, with the sequel which is now a part of history—the capitulation at Krugersdorp, the subsequent arrest and punishment of the leaders of the Reform Party (from whom was exacted £200,000 in fines), and the claim of indemnity of £1,667,938, 3s. 3d., of which a million was for “moral and intellectual damages.” As soon as Parliament met, the Colonial Secretary demanded a full inquiry into the origin and cir-

cumstances of the Raid. The Committee appointed sat during the Session of 1897, and reported that there was no evidence to show that either the Colonial Office or the Colonial Secretary was in any way privy to or implicated in the Raid, while Sir Hercules Robinson was exonerated from all knowledge of it, though it was found that his name had been used in a way which implied that his consent would eventually be given. In 1900 the Opposition brought forward a motion to reopen the inquiry, but it was defeated by an overwhelming majority.

At the moment the Raid occurred the Colonial Office was remonstrating with President Kruger with regard to the Aliens Immigration Act, as being a violation of the Convention of London, by which the right of residence was guaranteed to the Uitlander class. President Kruger suggested the reference of the matter to arbitration; but the Colonial Secretary pointed out that such a proposal was inconsistent with suzerainty. At this juncture the new High Commissioner, Sir Alfred Milner, proceeded to South Africa, and made investigation into the whole question. His consequent dispatches left no doubt in the mind of Mr. Chamberlain that the Uitlander grievance was real, and in reply

to the petition of 21,000 signatures which the High Commissioner forwarded to the Colonial Office, the Uitlanders were informed that the Government could not but express their "general sympathy with the memorialists," and were "earnestly desirous of seeing a speedy and substantial change effected in their position."

In a dispatch of May in the same year, Sir Alfred Milner pointed out that the position constituted a serious menace to British supremacy in South Africa. Upon the receipt of this dispatch Mr. Chamberlain suggested that the High Commissioner and President Kruger should meet in conference over the matters in dispute, and a conference took place at Bloemfontein. At the conference the President refused to consider the question of granting a franchise to the Uitlanders except as a concession to be made on terms which Mr. Chamberlain had already declined to consider. Negotiations followed, with the same failure to arrive at a common understanding, until at length, on September 22, the Colonial Secretary wrote that her Majesty's Government would "formulate their own proposals for final settlement of the issues which have been created in South Africa by the policy constantly followed for many years by the

Government of the South African Republic." The reply of President Kruger to this was the dispatch, on October 9, of an ultimatum demanding the immediate withdrawal of British troops from the frontiers, the return of our troops on the high seas, the reduction of garrisons to a point which the Boers thought sufficient, arbitration on all points at issue, the abandonment of all claim to suzerainty, and the cessation of all interference on behalf of British subjects in the Transvaal. Forty-eight hours were given for the consideration of these terms, the non-acceptance of which, it was stated, would be taken as a declaration of war.

The campaign in South Africa followed, with the result that is known—the conquest, after an enormous national effort (over a quarter of a million of men had to be dispatched to a base 6,000 miles away), of the Orange River Free State and the Transvaal, and their proclamation as Colonies of the Crown. At the Diamond Jubilee the Colonies had sent their troops to figure in the triumphal processions. They now sent them to the battlefield. Offers of assistance from the Colonies were pressed upon the Mother Country, and the dead who fell numbered many to whom the Motherland was but a name. Upon the conclusion of the war the



Colonial Secretary visited South Africa in person, and spent two months in the country, studying at first hand its problems as they presented themselves upon the termination of hostilities. He travelled many thousands of miles, and he saw many people, and on his return was presented with an Address of congratulation at the Guildhall, and dined with the King, the Queen at the same time receiving Mrs. Chamberlain, who accompanied her husband to the Colony. Mr. Chamberlain had sown ; but it was destined that he should not reap. Other hands than his were to deal with the new problems.

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## CHAPTER VIII.

### TARIFF REFORMER.

MR. CHAMBERLAIN'S sympathy with the Colonies we have seen manifesting itself as early in his career as 1855, when he arraigned no less a person than John Bright for his failure to recognize their value, and the significance of the Colonial idea. The years he spent at Downing Street impressed him increasingly with the importance of developing the

relations between the Mother Country and the Colonies. It was at the instigation of the Colonial Secretary that the Colonial troops formed part of the Diamond Jubilee celebrations, and he was quick to take advantage of the opportunity to confer with the Premiers of the different Colonies who journeyed at that time to the Motherland. When, in 1900, they came once more to do honour to the King at his Coronation, the Colonial Secretary again received them, debated further with them Colonial questions, and elicited from them their views on subjects which the Colonies had at heart. The Boer War had proved that the Colonial sentiment for the Motherland was a reality and not a sham. Mr. Chamberlain, ever practical, set himself the task of endeavouring to found the sentiment on a basis of mutual advantage. He came to the conclusion that he could best promote this cause by a system of duties by which the trade between the Colonies and the Mother Country might be encouraged by a preference given to the Colonies as against the foreigner in respect of certain commodities. It was obvious that an announcement foreshadowing that such a policy was in contemplation by the Government would arouse the determined hostility of all the adherents of the Free Trade

faith, and that a strenuous campaign must lie before him if he undertook the task of attempting to popularize so revolutionary a change. Moreover, he was now sixty-eight years of age. None of these things, however, daunted him. In May 1903, speaking at Birmingham, he dropped the first public hint of what was passing in his mind on the question, and a week later, when the subject of Old Age Pensions came up in the House of Commons, he again raised it, suggesting that the means for these pensions might be found in a reform of the fiscal system. He admitted frankly that a preference such as he contemplated would involve a tax on food; but he contended that the cost of living need not be added to by one farthing.

The Free Traders at once raised the alarm, and Free Trade being an article of faith widely held in the Unionist ranks, it soon became obvious that serious disruption was threatened in the party. On September 9, Mr. Chamberlain wrote to Mr. Balfour, intimating that he thought he could best serve the cause of Preference by remaining in an independent position. Unaware that this communication had passed, the Duke of Devonshire, Lord Balfour of Burleigh, Mr. Ritchie, and Lord George Hamilton decided

to resign their offices, and the three last-named did so. The Duke was persuaded to continue a member of the Cabinet ; but in October, when Mr. Balfour, at Sheffield, though declaring that public opinion was not ripe for a tax upon food, asked the country to delete the maxim that a tax must never be imposed except for revenue purposes, he also resigned.

Five days later, at Glasgow, Mr. Chamberlain opened his campaign. In St. Andrew's Hall, to an audience tense with expectation, he unfolded the new proposals. They were, briefly, the placing upon foreign corn of a duty not exceeding 2s. a quarter ; the levying of an import duty, not exceeding 10 per cent. on all manufactured goods, the amount of duty varying according to the amount of labour employed on the goods ; and a 5 per cent. duty on foreign meat and dairy produce. Maize and bacon were to be exempt from the new taxation, the latter as forming the food of some of the poorest of the population, the former as raw material for the farmer who fed his stock therewith. The new duties were to be accompanied by partial remissions of the duties on tea, sugar, coffee, and cocoa. A deluge of oratory followed. The Opposition, holding by Free Trade as a cardinal doctrine, and cheered in heart by the dissensions



in the Unionist ranks, flooded the constituencies with speakers, who denounced root and branch the new Protection, and they were assisted by the Unionist Free Food Union. On the other hand, even greater activity was exhibited by the Tariff Reform League established to aid the new proposals; and the President of the Liberal Unionist Association, as newly constituted, was Mr. Chamberlain. Despite his years, the ex-Colonial Secretary was untiring in the campaign, addressing gathering after gathering in all the great centres of industries. Among the more prominent of those who resisted the new propaganda were Mr. Asquith, and Mr. Chamberlain's old allies, the Duke of Devonshire and Lord Goschen. Sir William Harcourt also was momentarily drawn out of his retirement.

Mr. Balfour announced that the Government would not deal with the question during the currency of the Unionist Parliament, and in March 1905, when a motion against Retaliation was brought up in the House of Commons, he intimated that the Government and their followers would abstain from voting on abstract resolutions dealing with a policy not before the House. The motion was accordingly carried by 254 votes to 2. The announcement in 1905 that

the ex-Colonial Secretary would take a long holiday in the autumn seemed to indicate that the strain of the campaign had told upon him. He returned, however, and resumed his propaganda. In December the Government resigned, and the General Election took place, with the return of a Radical Parliament, whose three-figure majority eclipsed even that which was obtained by the Unionists in 1905. Seven Cabinet Ministers suffered defeat, Mr. Balfour among them. Mr. Chamberlain, returned as ever by his faithful constituents, took his seat on the front Opposition bench, Mr. Balfour having declared, in what was known as the "Valentine letters," that fiscal reform was and must remain the first constructive work of the Unionist party; but his interpositions were infrequent. He spoke once or twice on the Education Bill; and on the motion to censure Lord Milner in connection with a case of flogging which had occurred in South Africa, he defended his old subordinate with vigour. His last speech, like his first, was made on the subject of education, when in Committee he attacked the workableness of Mr. Birrell's proposals to meet the religious difficulty. Only once afterwards was his voice heard in the House of Commons—when, in 1910, the member for West Birmingham, a hopeless in-

valid, came to fulfil, so far as in him lay, his trust to his constituents and, in feeble accents, took, for the last time, the oath and his seat.

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## CHAPTER IX.

### STRICKEN.

ON his seventieth birthday Mr. Chamberlain was fêted at Highbury. The occasion was an auspicious one, and many friends assembled to do him honour. It was observed at the time that the celebrations seemed to cause him some strain, and in truth, though they knew it not, those who gathered were witnessing the close of Mr. Chamberlain's active public career. Not, indeed, that he did not afterwards play an important part in English political life, for his name remained a name to conjure with till the very end. But, henceforward, he was no longer to lead in person the fight. What he did was done through the written word. The great audiences of many thousands, whom he played upon as no other on his own side of politics could, were not again to see the "bonny fighter," whose force and fearlessness at all times compelled

their admiration. The levers of the party organization, in his own city especially, which responded to his lightest touch, were never quite to know the touch again. So perfect was the machine, and with such complete and continuing loyalty did his lieutenants maintain it, that it was to carry everything before it more signally than ever when, in 1910, the trial came ; but the cry which was raised in the crowd when the results were announced at Birmingham—"Where's Joe? where's Joe?"—marked where the triumph was incomplete. Its crown would have been the appearance of Mr. Chamberlain at the supreme moment of success.

Shortly after the fête at Highbury it was announced that the excitement of the celebrations had produced a state of fatigue which would necessitate for some time Mr. Chamberlain's withdrawal from active participation in public affairs. For the next two years his name appeared but rarely in the public prints. Only when he left Birmingham for London, and London for the Continent, or when some political organization passed a resolution of sympathy or adherence, did it figure, in a brief note, in the columns of the Press. The National Union of Conservative and Liberal Unionist Associations, meeting in 1907, in Birmingham, sent him a



heartfelt message of regret that he should be absent from its deliberations ; and, a more notable tribute still to his personality, the Imperial Conference for which the representatives of the Empire had assembled, sent him a telegram expressing the "deep sympathy of the Conference with him in his illness, and its earnest hope that he may be speedily restored to public life." Another tribute of a different but not less pleasing kind reached him at the beginning of 1908, when he was awarded the Mary Kingsley Memorial medal by the Liverpool School of Tropical Medicine. "In selecting you as the recipient of the medal," ran the accompanying letter, "the School desires to recognize that your services to the great cause of the advancement of our knowledge of tropical medicine have assisted the cause as effectually as the labours of the most devoted scientists."

Eighteen months had now elapsed since Mr. Chamberlain's presence was withdrawn from active politics, but the loyalty of his supporters was, if possible, more ardent than ever. The Midland Liberal Unionist Association, meeting in January 1908, assured him of an "unchanging devotion," and, three weeks later, the members of the Tariff Reform League, gathered together for their annual meeting, passed, on Mr.

Chaplin's motion, a resolution looking forward to the time when he would resume "active leadership of the movement," and congratulating him on the "great success which he can now see of his advocacy of Tariff Reform and Imperial Preference." Mr. Chamberlain sent to the meeting a letter, the reading of which was followed with close attention. The writer, having expressed his regret that he could not take the share in the work which he wished, sounded a note of confidence. Recent by-elections in Mid-Devon and Hereford, he pointed out, had shown how Tariff Reform was advancing, and a "General Election at which Tariff Reform would be the chief issue would show a very different result from the last." The report which was made to this same meeting showed the scope of the League's activities. Over three thousand meetings, it stated, had been held in the country during the year, and this was exclusive of meetings held at by-elections.

Mr. Chamberlain was at this time—January 1908—at Prince's Gardens, and he wrote to a correspondent that he was "getting better," but was "still far from having recovered my ancient strength." At the end of February he left London for Cannes, where he took up residence at the Villa Victoria. Here

he remained until the end of May, when he went to Aix-les-Bains. It was noted that he "walked with difficulty," but appeared to be in improved health. At Aix he followed a douche treatment prescribed for him, and went for frequent drives. The testimony to the affectionate regard in which he was held continued to follow him. Now it was a telegram from Highbury from the Liberal-Unionists of West Birmingham of "continued and unbounded confidence," and expressing a wish that the "leader" might yet see the triumph of his principles; now a message from the Council and Senate of the University of Birmingham, congratulating him on attaining his 72nd birthday. Good wishes upon this event were also sent to him from the Lord Mayor of Birmingham on behalf of the citizens, from the Tariff Reform General Purposes Committee, and from the Unionist Members of the House of Commons. Mr. Chamberlain on his part did not forget the happy anniversary of a life-long friend when, in the first days of July, he sent Mr. Jesse Collings a pair of silver vases to commemorate his golden wedding.

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## CHAPTER X.

## LAST YEARS.

ON the 12th of July the Chamberlains left Aix-les-Bains for Paris, travelling by motor car, and breaking the journey at Ouchy. Halting in London for a couple of days only, they proceeded to Birmingham. For the next two months Mr. Chamberlain remained in complete retirement, but at the end of September the public prints chronicled that he had taken "a long drive round Birmingham." About this time a rumour appeared in a Sunday newspaper, published in London, that Mr. Chamberlain no longer intended to remain associated with politics, and was preparing a message of farewell to his constituents. An immediate disclaimer to this was issued by Mr. Neville Chamberlain, who stated that his brother was better in health than he had been "for a long time past."

During 1908—occasionally, indeed, during 1907—candidates at by-elections who fought under the banner of Tariff Reform had received inspiring messages from the great apostle of their faith, and during the succeeding year, as



the shadow of the General Election was more clearly seen and Tariff Reformers laid their plans for the fight, messages from Highbury became more and more of moment. They were given, as Mr. Chamberlain always gave, for those who acknowledged his inspiration, without stint. To the official organ of Tariff Reform he wrote this year a New Year's Message which breathed his characteristic spirit of confident pegging away. The progress which had been made he admitted had been very satisfactory, but that was not enough. Tariff Reformers must be ready to "meet demands of the people as soon as the principle of Tariff Reform is finally adopted by the electors" and able to "table practical proposals the moment opportunity arises."

Towards the end of January it was authoritatively announced that Mr. Chamberlain would offer himself for re-election when the General Election came, though he might have to ask his constituents to excuse him from speaking in the House. In the beginning of February he left for Cannes. He stayed at the Villa Beatrice for three months, and then returned, after a short stay in London, to Highbury. To this date belongs an interesting anecdote. The visit of the King and Queen to Birmingham had been announced and a movement was on foot to bring

the Birmingham Territorials up to full strength in honour of the occasion. Colonel W. R. Ludlow wrote to Mr. Chamberlain asking him for his co-operation in seeking the assistance of Birmingham manufacturers and merchants. Mr. Chamberlain, in his reply, which was entirely sympathetic, said he did not think he had "now any influence with the manufacturers or merchants of Birmingham." Colonel Ludlow replied that the right hon. gentleman was quite mistaken, and, he added, "an expression from you of sympathy and encouragement is worth a hundred recruits to me."

The Royal visitors came to Birmingham to open the University of which Mr. Chamberlain was Chancellor, and King Edward was the first to remark upon the incompleteness of the gathering. "No one can regret more than I do," he said in performing the inaugural ceremony, "that your distinguished fellow-citizen, the Chancellor, is not with us to-day to witness the completion of a scheme which has always been dear to his heart." But if Mr. Chamberlain was not present in person to receive the illustrious guests, his sense of the significance of the occasion was abundantly manifested in the message which he sent to the *Birmingham Gazette*. As usual with him, he looked forward. "What we

have completed," he wrote, "is but the beginning. The foundations are laid, but the building up of the structure lies with the citizens of Birmingham. To them I commend the development of the great institution we have begun, and I rely upon them to make it worthy of the character and reputation of our city."

The day after the University was opened was the 73rd anniversary of Mr. Chamberlain's birthday. It had been intended to celebrate the event in Birmingham in public fashion, but in view of the Royal visit the idea was abandoned. Elsewhere, however, the day was celebrated in various ways. At London, in the Albert Hall, a reception was given at which several thousand people attended, including, naturally, many members of Parliament. From this gathering Mr. Austen Chamberlain was desired by Lord Ridley to convey to his father the "greetings of three thousand vice-presidents of the Tariff Reform League and innumerable old friends," and their "confidence in the early triumph" of the cause. At Farnworth a salute of seventy-three guns was fired. The most interesting suggestion, however, in connection with the occasion does not seem to have been carried out. This was made by a Hampshire Tariff Reformer who proposed that each branch of the Tariff

Reform League should contribute money for the text and address of a message to the leader, and each sympathetic member or branch a halfpenny to defray the cost of appending his name to the telegram. The Central Office of the Tariff Reform League was to receive the telegrams and arrange for their being forwarded as a whole. Unfortunately, among other things, for the revenues of the Post Office, the project of this monster telegram was not carried into execution.

Mr. Chamberlain left Birmingham for London a few days after the anniversary, and, upon July 19 at Prince's Gardens, had the honour of a visit from the late King Edward. The attention touched the invalid, who was greatly cheered by the visit. After a stay of a few weeks, Mr. Chamberlain returned to Birmingham. In September Mr. Balfour, who had been preceded by Mr. Asquith at a gathering in the same place, addressed a great gathering in the Bingley Hall. To this gathering the invalid of Highbury sent a message which roused tumultuous enthusiasm, looking clearly in the face, as it did, the situation which had arisen, and defining the issue of the coming struggle. The fate of the Budget had not as yet been decided in the Upper House. "I hope," wrote Mr. Chamberlain, "the House of Lords will see their way to force a General



Election." Mr. Asquith, he went on, "admits that Tariff Reform is the only alternative. It is, therefore, between the Budget and Tariff Reform that you have to choose." It is pleasant to think that, though he could not be present at the gathering, twentieth century science enabled Mr. Chamberlain to listen, by means of the electrophone, to Mr. Balfour's speech. Mr. Balfour visited Birmingham again towards the end of October for the purpose of receiving the honorary degree of the new University. After the ceremony he went to Highbury, and spent some time with his old comrade-in-arms. The degree was on the same occasion conferred upon Mr. Chamberlain *in absentia*.

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## CHAPTER XI.

### THE ELECTION OF 1910.

PARLIAMENT was dissolved at the beginning of December, and both sides threw themselves into the work of preparing for the General Election. Mr. Chamberlain took advantage of the publication in book form of a series of articles by a brilliant journalist-advocate of his

views to issue a preface, in which he stated the issue with vigour and point. The House of Lords had by this time "hung up" the Budget till the constituencies should pronounce upon it, and had, in consequence, been vigorously denounced by the Government and their supporters for arrogant usurpation of rights which were the rights of the Commons alone. Ministers, rejoined Mr. Chamberlain, were evading the issue which was "Tariff or Budget?" the title of the book. They were raising instead the constitutional question. "It is better," proceeded the writer in a memorable phrase, "to abolish Cobdenism and not the Constitution, to pull down free imports and not a Second Chamber whose only offence is giving the nation a chance to speak for itself."

West Birmingham adopted him unanimously, and in the first days of the year he published his election address. He pointed out to all who cared for the success of Tariff Reform that the opportunity was a unique one, and he crystallized the whole situation in words worth quoting.

"You will decide whether you wish to be governed by one Chamber or two; whether you wish to destroy the union of this kingdom or maintain it; whether you wish your national defence strengthened or weakened; whether you

wish our agriculture and industry developed and employment extended, or capital and enterprise discouraged, unemployment aggravated, and distress increased. Last, but not least, you will decide whether you will accept or reject the invitation of our kinsmen across the seas and join with them in promoting our mutual trade and common power by the adoption of a policy of mutual preference."

Besides issuing his own address, Mr. Chamberlain sent messages of good cheer east, north, west, and south to those who were fighting his battles, and on the eve of the campaign he united with Mr. Balfour in a joint manifesto, assuring the electors that Tariff Reform would not increase the cost of living to the working classes, nor the proportion of taxation to be paid by them, while it would, on the other hand, enable us to reduce the present taxes on articles of working-class consumption, and would lessen unemployment and develop our trade with the British dominions beyond the seas. This was followed a few days later by an eloquent "appeal" for Tariff Reform, in which Mr. Chamberlain's arguments on behalf of fiscal change were once more marshalled and recapitulated. To the suggestion which was made in several quarters that the letters and manifestoes published over

the signature of Mr. Chamberlain were not genuine, indignant denial was publicly made. Mr. Walter Long, at a meeting at Burnley on January 11, declared that he had had several prolonged conversations with Mr. Chamberlain on politics, and any one who suggested he was not able to express his views and thoroughly comprehend and gauge all that was going on in the country made a suggestion absolutely devoid of foundation. Another speaker stated that the manifestoes were, to his own knowledge, "dictated by Mr. Chamberlain."

On January 14 the member for West Birmingham was returned without opposition to the new Parliament. He led a triumph. Birmingham not only went solid for Tariff Reform, but the majorities in the various divisions showed all-round increases. South of Derbyshire and Cheshire the example of Birmingham was overwhelmingly followed. All the seats in Kent, Surrey, Sussex, and Herts went Unionist, all but one in Middlesex, Wilts, and Warwick, and all but two in Northampton and Essex. Altogether 121 of the 327 seats which had been Liberal or Labour before the election were wrested from their possessors. Balancing this with losses, there remained for the Unionists a balance of 100 so far as England was concerned.



Scotland, Ireland, and Wales were substantially unchanged, but there was a net gain in their case for Unionism of six seats. The decision of the constituencies caused the highest gratification to Mr. Chamberlain. How the result would have been had he been able to appear in the forefront of the battle it is, of course, impossible to say, but there is little doubt that the day would have gone better even than it did.

In the beginning of February, Mr. Chamberlain arrived in London on his way to France. The elections were now over, and Parliament having reassembled, the ceremony of members taking oath was proceeding. Suddenly on the 16th of February, as the sitting was closing, a figure appeared in the Chamber which hushed it instantly to a painful stillness. The figure was Mr. Chamberlain. Supported by his son upon one hand, and Lord Morpeth, the Liberal Unionist Whip, upon the other, the member for West Birmingham, whose wont it was to enter the Chamber with head erect and alert eye, was supported to the Treasury Bench. There, with bowed head, he sat while the Clerk Assistant brought to him the oath. After the Clerk, and in accents full of emotion, Mr. Chamberlain recited the words which the Statute enjoins. While he did so his son inscribed his father's

name in the Roll of Parliament. The great volume was carried to Mr. Chamberlain and a pen was placed between the fingers of his left hand. With the point of the pen he touched the signature, attesting its validity. Then Sir Courtenay Ilbert, the Clerk of the House, performed the time-honoured ceremony of presenting the newly-elected member to the House: "West Birmingham, Sir, Mr. Chamberlain." Mr. Lowther took the fingers of the outstretched left hand and said simply, "I am glad to see you." "Thank you," replied Mr. Chamberlain. And then, silently, the member for West Birmingham was led from the Chamber. The moving scene was enacted in an empty House. One or two members only were present, and they withdrew to a distant part of the Chamber until it was over. Immediately after this Mr. Chamberlain left London for Cannes, taking up residence again at the Villa Victoria. He returned to London at the end of May, and on June 5 the new Sovereign paid him the distinction of a visit. King George remained an hour with his distinguished subject, with whom and Mrs. Chamberlain he took tea.

The death of King Edward altered the character of the celebrations in connection with Mr. Chamberlain's 74th birthday, which occurred a

month after this visit, but many gatherings were held throughout the country for the purpose of commemorating the occasion. At Prince's Restaurant in London a distinguished company of "ninety ardent Tariff Reformers" met at dinner, and sent their leader a message of "unalterable devotion." Mr. Balfour, who was unable to attend the gathering, sent a notable letter. "My affection for him as a friend and my admiration for him as a statesman," ran the letter, "make me desire to associate myself with those who are celebrating this anniversary, and I feel confident that as, year by year, the mists of old controversies are dissipated, his services to the Empire will more and more clearly appear in their true magnitude and proportion." A fine tribute was paid at this dinner by Mr. Walter Long to the devotion of Mrs. Chamberlain "through years of anxiety." Mr. Chamberlain, who, for the first time since his illness, spent his birthday at Prince's Gardens, was able to go for a short stroll in the neighbourhood of the house with Mrs. Chamberlain, and also to take a drive. It is pleasant to chronicle that Mr. Lloyd George, who happened on this date to be replying in the House of Commons to criticisms of Mr. Austen Chamberlain on the Budget, prefaced his reply by requesting his critic to permit members on the

Ministerialists to join in a message of congratulation to his distinguished relative.

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## CHAPTER XII.

### THE END.

THE deceased statesman received during his lifetime many honours. The Universities of Oxford and Cambridge, and the University of Dublin offered him their honorary degrees ; he was, as already noted, Chancellor of the University of Birmingham, which also conferred on him the degree of LL.D. ; and the students of Birmingham elected him their Lord Rector, as the Glasgow students had done previously. For the last twenty-five years of his career his personality attracted the pamphleteer and the critic of public affairs, and several biographies of him appeared during his lifetime. In the British Museum Catalogue over a hundred entries figure beneath his name. For the most part, from the "extravaganza intended to satirize the Rt. Hon. Joseph Chamberlain" of 1884, to the "political allegory of Joseph the



Deliverer ” of several years ago, they are attacks upon, or defences of, their subject at different stages of his career by English writers ; but French, German, Italian, and even Dutch items also figure.

The remainder of the story is soon told. It is unhappily a story of hopeless decline, of waiting for the inevitable end. His departure from the arena of public life was recognized as final towards the close of the year 1910, though messages of encouragement to Tariff Reform candidates continued to issue from Highbury down to the spring of 1914.

His last public appearance was at a Unionist garden party held at his home early in June 1914, when he bade farewell to his faithful supporters in West Birmingham. His appearance evoked all the old enthusiasm, and the men who had shared many a stern political fight with him bared their heads and shouted, “ Long life to you ! We wish we had you with us now.” Mr. Chamberlain smiled and shook his head.

At a quarter past ten on the evening of July 2nd he died at his London residence—peacefully, surrounded by the members of his family. So passes one of the great figures of British statesmanship ; so closes a fateful and deeply interesting chapter in British political history.

MR. CHAMBERLAIN AS A RADICAL :  
THE UNAUTHORIZED PROGRAMME.

BY J. A. SPENDER, Editor of the  
*Westminster Gazette.*

" I HAVE spent twenty-four hours under the dragon's roof, and am prepared to prove that he partakes of the qualities of ordinary human nature. He eats, drinks, sleeps like other mortals, and I have not yet been able to detect the cloven hoof." So wrote Sir William Harcourt after a visit to Mr. Chamberlain at Birmingham in January 1880. The words give us an interesting hint of Mr. Chamberlain's reputation in what may be called his pre-historic period. He was still, in 1880, a quite junior private member of the House of Commons, but he had already a much more than local reputation, and in Conservative and even in Whig circles his name was a symbol for all that was outrageous in advanced politics. Locally he had the reputation of an extremely energetic and

capable administrator, who had laboured wisely and well for his native town. But the outside public had seen him leading the Nonconformists in an irreconcilable opposition to the famous Clause 25 of Mr. Forster's Education Bill, and had heard him complaining bitterly that the Liberal Government was much too little Liberal. He was, moreover, a strenuous advocate of secular education, and he had toyed with Republican opinions in the abstract. Disloyalty and atheism were among the charges hurled against him when he stood (unsuccessfully) for Sheffield in 1874. His opponents pictured him not merely as a Radical, but as a real red-cap revolutionary, whose hand was against monarchy, religion, and property. A milder count in the indictment represented him as trying always to Americanize our politics by means of the Birmingham caucus, of which he was the joint inventor, together with that man of wrath, Mr. Schnadhorst. The present generation will never realize what terror the word "caucus" had for their parents.

When the real Chamberlain made his appearance in the House of Commons in 1876 he was found to differ considerably from the Chamberlain of legend. The raw demagogue whom the House expected proved at once to be a highly

accomplished and self-possessed debater, who was a master of the arts which conciliate the House of Commons. The product seemed to old Parliamentary hands to be, if anything, a little too finished. A story was long current that after he had been about two years in Parliament Mr. Chamberlain went one day to an old and distinguished member and modestly asked him for any advice or criticism on his speeches. "It is all very nice, very nice, Mr. Chamberlain," is said to have been the answer, "but the House would take it as *such* a compliment if now and again you could manage to break down." But if his manner was beyond reproach he did not abate his opinions to please a Conservative Parliament. His first speech was in support of secular education, and many subsequent speeches were in favour of what the unwise called "fads"—the mitigation of prison discipline, the Gothenburg system, the abolition of flogging in the army. On the latter question he joined hands with the Irish Party in the famous obstructive debates at the beginning of July 1879, and found himself in open collision with Lord Hartington in consequence. Lord Hartington had rebuked the Radicals, and declared their tactics to be ill-advised, and prejudicial to the dignity of Parliament. He had



also rather pointedly absented himself from the debates. The retort came swiftly from Mr. Chamberlain: "It was rather inconvenient," he said, "that they should have so little of the presence of the noble lord, *lately the leader of the Opposition, but now the leader of a section only.*" Mr. Chamberlain, clearly, had found himself, and was soon speaking freely and audaciously, and without regard to the convenience of his titular leaders. All this time he was heart and soul with Mr. Gladstone in his crusade against the Turk. The Government, he said in the House of Commons, were spending millions to satisfy "the vulgar patriotism of the Music Halls." As the election approached, his speeches in the country were ever more vehement, and the moderates complained that he was passing the bounds of decent political warfare. But his place in the country was now firmly established, and his inclusion in the new Government had become a certainty.

Admission to the Cabinet, however, is something more than inclusion in the Government, and there was a sharp tussle before this last step was achieved. In the nick of time during the formation of the 1880 Government some wise person discovered "to his horror" (as Lord

Morley tells us) that "Mr. Gladstone was not in the least alive to the importance of the leaders of the Radical section, and had never dreamed of them for his Cabinet." He held that young men new to Parliament should exercise patience, and think themselves fortunate if they were given an opportunity of proving their fitness in subordinate office. At last he was prevailed upon to send for Sir Charles Dilke. "To his extreme amazement," Lord Morley tells us, "Sir Charles refused to serve, unless either himself or Mr. Chamberlain were in the Cabinet. The Prime Minister might make his choice between them; then the other would accept a subordinate post. Mr. Gladstone discoursed severely on this enormity, and the case was adjourned." Ultimately the lot fell upon Mr. Chamberlain, who went to the Board of Trade, while Sir Charles became Under-Secretary for Foreign Affairs. Trouble between Whigs and Radicals was predicted from the beginning, but there was little amiss during the first year. Like Mr. Lloyd George in subsequent years, Mr. Chamberlain made himself a strength to the Government by his knowledge of business, and by his skill in disentangling complicated transactions and bringing conflicting interests to terms. His Bankruptcy Act was a very skilful achieve-

ment ; and though his Merchant Shipping Bill partly miscarried, and involved him in sharp conflict with the shipowners, his effort on behalf of the seaman was highly honourable and courageous. It was whispered even in those days that he was not quite sound on the Free Trade question, and the rumour caused the same sort of shudder as the suspected presence of a Socinian in the College of Cardinals might to a pious Roman Catholic. Scandal, however, was avoided, and he was so well instructed in the true faith by his permanent secretary, the late Lord Farrer, that the Free Trade speeches which he made at the 1885 election were by common consent among the best and most forcible. The germ of trouble lay in the fact, which soon became clear, that Mr. Chamberlain did not share the strict views about Cabinet responsibility and Cabinet co-operation which were a life-long tradition with Mr. Gladstone. Comparatively early in the life of the Government he abstained from voting in a division on Transvaal affairs—he was at this date more of a pro-Boer than most of his colleagues—and “before the Cabinet was six months old,” says Lord Morley, “the Duke of Argyll was plucking Mr. Gladstone’s sleeve with some vivacity at the Birmingham language on Irish land.” As

we shall presently see, there was to be much of this sleeve-plucking before the Government was finished.

But in order to follow the course of events from this point we must have a clear understanding of Mr. Chamberlain's political ideas—the ideas which he and his group began sedulously to propagate from the year 1882 onwards. The simplest plan is to come at once to the finished product, as presented in the unauthorized programme of 1885, and in the numerous platform speeches made during that year.

What exactly was the "Unauthorized Programme"? According to the version which Mr. Chamberlain himself appears to have given of it in later years, it included four items: (1) Local Government; (2) Free Schools; (3) Small Holdings; (4) Graduated Taxation.\* It is hard to realize in these days that a controversy on any of these subjects could have convulsed the Liberal Party twenty-five years ago; and if we turn to Mr. Chamberlain's speeches we shall discover that a good deal more was at stake. Local Government was never an unauthorized item, and more than once we find him dismissing it as commonplace

\* See *Joseph Chamberlain, the Man and the Statesman*, by N. Murrell Marris, page 237.



Whiggery. "We are told," he said at Warrington (September 8, 1885), "to inscribe on our banners 'Local Government' and 'The Cheapening of the Transfer of Land.' These are good things—most excellent things. I do not know if they are of a nature to cause the hot blood of a Whig to course rapidly through his veins; but I must admit I do not expect that they will excite the passionate fervour which I desire to see amongst the people." In the forefront of the Warrington speech comes compulsory purchase of land for allotments, small holdings, and artisans' dwellings, followed by free schools, graduated taxation, and abolition or drastic reform of the game laws. Lastly comes "the proposal, the just demand which has so much fluttered some of our opponents," for "an inquiry into the illegal appropriation of public rights and public endowments; and, if this be found to have taken place within the last half century, for their restitution or for adequate compensation." Looking over these speeches, I cannot discover that any particular four doctrines were laid down as essential. In the Glasgow speech Disestablishment of the Church is warmly advocated, and a scheme for National Councils is at least adumbrated. "I have proposed that there

should also" (that is, in addition to popular local authorities) "be established in Ireland and Scotland, and perhaps also in Wales and in England, National Councils for dealing with affairs which, although they are National, are yet not of Imperial concern. I have thought that to such Councils might be referred the local control and administration which is now exercised by officials and Boards in Dublin and in Edinburgh, and by the Departments of the Government in London. Perhaps that would be as far as it would be wise to go in the first instance; but if these Councils were approved, if the work were satisfactory, then I think we might hereafter even go further, and we might entrust to them the duty of preparing legislation—legislation in National as contrasted with Imperial interests." In the speech at the Victoria Hall, London (September 24, 1885), which was generally construed as Mr. Chamberlain's ultimatum to official Liberals, the irreducible minimum of the programme is stated as graduated taxation, free schools, and compulsory acquisition of land.

The truth is, the "Unauthorized Programme" itself had its authorized and unauthorized portions—the portions to which Mr. Chamberlain and his group were definitely committed, and

which they determined to press upon the leaders of the party, and the portions which they held as pious opinions and were prepared to postpone to a more convenient season. The whole scheme is set out in the series of articles which appeared in the *Fortnightly Review* under Mr. Morley's editorship, and were afterwards republished and circulated during the 1885 campaign by the National Liberal Federation. These articles were supposed at the time to be the joint work of Mr. Chamberlain, Mr. Morley, and Sir Charles Dilke; but it matters little whose was the hand that actually wrote them. The publication was generally accepted as the authentic account of the new gospel, and Mr. Chamberlain himself frequently appealed to it as the highest source of information.\* To the proposals already rehearsed it added Manhood Suffrage, equal Electoral Districts, Payment of Members, Disestablishment and Disendowment of the Church, sundry proposals for housing in towns, including the appropriation of the "unearned increment" for the purpose of bet-

\* "What is the Radical programme? I believe that the Liberal Federation which has been meeting here to-day has just published and put into circulation a work with that title which I commend to your consideration. It consists of essays and articles from the *Fortnightly Review* which I commend to your consideration."—*Warrington, September 8, 1885.*

terment, and the elaborate scheme of Local Government reform culminating in National Councils already mentioned. As the campaign proceeded, the stress was more and more laid on the three proposals which were finally embodied in the ultimatum; but in regard to the rest Mr. Chamberlain was accustomed to avow himself "unrepentant and unabashed," in spite of the storm which had raged around him from the time when he seized the opportunity of the Bright celebration at Birmingham (June 13, 1885) to launch the whole programme, Disestablishment and Payment of Members included. The present writer vividly remembers that occasion, and the astonishment which was expressed in Birmingham, as elsewhere, at the audacity and, as some thought, the inopportuneness of that deliverance.

So far for the bare propositions. Let us now, with the speeches and the essays before us, endeavour to arrive at the spirit and the frame of mind in which Mr. Chamberlain approached these problems. We need not suppose that political strategy was ruled out of his calculations. The situation in which the Liberal Party found itself about the year 1885 was full of embarrassment to a Radical Cabinet Minister. The Government of which so much



was expected was plainly losing its hold upon its supporters. In spite of its objection to a spirited foreign policy, it had become deeply involved in Egyptian affairs, and in domestic legislation it had done nothing thus far to strike the imagination of the public. The Radicals threw the blame on the Whig members of the Cabinet, who, they said, muddled affairs abroad and obstructed progress at home. The chief event which hung over the future was the admission to the franchise of two million new voters of the labouring class, a great fact which would require all parties to reconsider their position. The possibility, as the Radicals saw it, of retrieving the Liberal position, and making the future their own, lay in appealing to this class and to the working-class of the towns. The question was urgent, and the new impulse, as they predicted, would never come from the Whigs or from arm-chair politicians who feared democracy, and desired to rest and be thankful. On the existing lines of Whig ascendancy the party, they declared, would be destroyed at the coming election, and the great opportunity would pass to Tory democrats, who, like Lord Randolph Churchill, were as much alive as the Radicals to the new situation. Salvation was only to be won, and the inevi-

table revolt of the middle-classes counteracted, if the Liberal Party "sloughed off" the Whigs, threw itself boldly on the working-classes in town and country, and came forward under Radical inspiration with a strong programme of social—even Socialistic—reform.

Thus, in the introductory chapter to the "Radical Programme" we find one section boldly headed, "The probable extinction of Whiggism." "The establishment of single-member constituencies," says the writer, "will remove the possibility which has hitherto existed, of arranging, even where the majority of the voters may have been of a decidedly Radical complexion, for the return of one Moderate in conjunction with one Radical. . . . The buffers on which timid Liberalism has hitherto relied against advanced Liberalism will henceforth disappear. In every case, or almost every case, the buttons will be taken off the foils, and the duel will be confined to the real principals." It was not then or later Mr. Chamberlain's habit to wait for the painless extinction of his opponents by natural causes, if he saw a way of accelerating the progress by his own efforts; and the unauthorized agitation had not gone far before a running fusillade was set up between him and the leading Whigs.

In a passage in his Warrington speech, which was universally interpreted as applying to Lord Hartington, he declared it to be "perfectly futile and ridiculous for any political Rip Van Winkle to come down from the mountain on which he has been slumbering, and to tell us that these things are to be excluded from the Liberal programme. The world has moved on while these dreamers have been sleeping, and it would be absurd to ignore the growth of public opinion and the change in the situation which the Reform Acts have produced." "I do not wish you," he added, "to think that I desire to rest my case upon political necessity alone. If we cannot convince our allies of the justice and reasonableness of our views, then, with whatever reluctance, we must part company; we will appeal unto Cæsar; we will go to the people from whom we come, and whose cause we plead" (September 8, 1885). In the Trowbridge speech a month later (October 14) another eminent Whig was vigorously assailed by name as "more Conservative than the Conservative leader himself." "Mr. Goschen says that he has been told to stand aside, I do not know by whom—not by me. We cannot spare him. He performs in the Liberal party the useful part of the skeleton at Egyptian feasts.

He is there to repress our enthusiasm and to moderate our joy." The passage is too familiar to need recalling. Rip Van Winkle and the Skeleton became bywords in the Radical camp during the remaining weeks of the election.

It is not to be supposed that the Whigs remained idle when thus assailed ; but the story of their activities may be deferred for a moment until we have completed our analysis of Mr. Chamberlain's leading ideas. In view of recent controversies it is interesting to find that he was at no pains to deny that he was a Socialist. A Communist, he insists, he is not ; but if any one chooses to call him a Socialist he will not complain. His doctrine is clearly stated in the Introduction to the " Radical Programme " :—

" (The measures that are necessary) sound the death-knell of the *laissez-faire* system ; and if the agricultural labourer is not strong enough to look after himself, to take the initiative in the social reforms prompted by a rational estimate of private interest, there is an organized body of politicians in this country who will at least do thus much for him. If it be said that this is communism, the answer is that it is not. If it be said that it is legislation of a Socialist tendency, the impeachment may readily be admitted. Between such legislation and Com-



munism there is all the difference in the world. Communism means the reduction of everything to a dead level, the destruction of private adventure, the paralysis of private industry, the atrophy of private effort. The Socialistic measures now contemplated would preserve in their normal vigour and freshness all the individual activities of English citizenship, and would do nothing more spoliatory than tax—if and in what degree necessary—aggregations of wealth for the good of the community.”

This brings us to the famous doctrine of Ransom which was propounded at Birmingham in January 1885. Here again quotation is necessary :—

“ If you will go back to the early history of our social system you will find that when our social arrangements first began to shape themselves, every man was born into the world with natural rights, with a right to share in the great inheritance of the community, with a right to a part of the land of his birth. But all those rights have passed away. The common rights of ownership have disappeared. Some of them have been sold ; some of them have been given away by people who had no right to dispose of them ; some of them have been lost through apathy and ignorance ; some have been de-

stroyed by fraud ; and some have been acquired by violence. Private ownership has taken the place of these communal rights, and this system has become so interwoven with our habits and usages, it has been so sanctioned by law and protected by custom, that it might be very difficult, and perhaps impossible, to reverse it. But, then, I ask, what ransom will property pay for the security which it enjoys ? What substitute will it find for the natural rights which have ceased to be recognized ? Society is banded together in order to protect itself against the instincts of those of its members who would make very short work of private ownership, if they were left alone. That is all very well, but I maintain that society owes to these men something more than mere toleration in return for the restrictions which it places upon their liberty of action.”—(Birmingham, January 5, 1885.)

The storm which this passage raised will still be within the memory of many readers of this book. Its crude “Rousseauism” was vehemently denounced by all academic persons, and the whole Conservative press was agreed that it constituted a reckless incitement to the predatory classes, whose “instinct” for “making short work of private ownership” is some-

what naïvely referred to in the concluding words. The idea that a solatium was due to those members of society who felt that their "liberty of action" was impaired by the restraint of this instinct was, indeed, somewhat audacious; but the belief that the community had been dispossessed of its "rights" by the owners of property and especially the owners of landed property, and that it was entitled to compensation for this injury, was much more in the air at the time when Mr. Chamberlain was speaking than it has been since. For one thing Mr. Henry George's book, *Progress and Poverty*, had had an enormous circulation, and made a profound impression upon English Radicals. Men who would have vehemently denied that they were Communists, or even Socialists, and were staunch upholders of all other kinds of property, yet held that private ownership in land was "robbery," and advocated the single tax of twenty shillings in the pound, which would have appropriated its whole value without compensation to the State. Mr. Chamberlain never at any time committed himself to Henry George's doctrine; on the contrary, the "Radical Programme" (page 54) contains a passage branding that doctrine as "conspicuously false," and denouncing the

assumptions on which it was based as "altogether unfounded." Nevertheless, the atmosphere in which he was speaking had, so to speak, been made by the "Progress and Poverty" propaganda, and the language which he used about the spoliation practised by the landed classes gave great pleasure to advanced politicians who took Henry George's book for their gospel. They said with one accord that Mr. Chamberlain, alone of public men, was feeling his way towards the light, and though they regretted the proposal to pay compensation, even on a moderate scale, for land taken for allotments or other public purposes, they warmly welcomed the idea, which formed part of the first unauthorized programme, of holding a public inquiry into the illegal appropriation of public rights or public endowments, and of compelling their restitution, or the payment of adequate compensation, in all cases which were proved during the last fifty years. Speaking generally, they liked the tone which Mr. Chamberlain adopted to the landed class, and especially his vehement assertion that land differed from other kinds of property in its obligations to the public, and his advocacy of compulsion when these were not voluntarily acknowledged.

The landed class, of course, retaliated sharply.



Lord Salisbury compared him to Jack Cade ; and others denounced him as a Cockney politician ignorant of agriculture, who was making unscrupulous bids for the votes of the labourers. It is true that he had lived all his life in towns ; but for some years past he had gone to school with Mr. Jesse Collings, who prided himself on a straight descent from the labouring class, and whose knowledge of the conditions of rural life was, from that point of view, unrivalled. Townsman though he might be, Mr. Chamberlain easily held his own with the best brains of the countryside, and he took enormous pains to acquaint himself at first hand with every essential fact. The present writer had the good fortune, when still an undergraduate at Oxford, to accompany Mr. Chamberlain and Mr. Jesse Collings on a tour of inspection through one of the poorest districts of Wiltshire, and he remembers vividly the keen interest and zest which Mr. Chamberlain threw into his talks with labourers and small farmers. The raw material gathered in this and similar tours was used with admirable effect in the speeches at Hull and Trowbridge a few weeks later ; and though rural experts looked with eagle eyes for lapses in knowledge, they failed to discover them. It is, indeed, due to Mr. Chamberlain

to say that subsequent legislation on allotments and small holdings followed the lines laid down in the unauthorized programme, which may be said to have reached its fulfilment in the Small Holdings Act of 1907.

We may go further, and say that the whole of the irreducible minimum of the Victoria Hall speech is now embodied in legislation. We have free schools, we have graduated taxation, we have the compulsory acquisition of land for allotments and other public purposes. In later days Mr. Chamberlain was wont to taunt the Liberal Party with its passion for mechanical and constitutional change, as distinguished from social reform; but the unofficial part of the unauthorized programme included many items which were denounced at the time as constitutional revolutions. A whole chapter of the "Radical Programme" is devoted to Disestablishment and Disendowment, and the National Church is declared to be a "doomed institution." Another chapter advocates Manhood Suffrage and Payment of Members. The House of Lords question, on the other hand, figured little, if at all, in this agitation, and here we get an interesting hint of the practical bent of Mr. Chamberlain's mind. No one used stronger language about the Peers during

the controversy between the two Houses on the Franchise question ; but that was over, and the House of Lords had given way. There was, therefore, no immediate grievance to lay hold of, and it was not Mr. Chamberlain's habit to waste energy on the abstract. Years earlier he had said that no Radical would go out of his way to challenge the Monarchy, unless the Monarchy departed from its constitutional neutrality, and now he used similar language about the Peers. "No one now menaces the Peers with legislative disestablishment, because they have acquiesced in the National will. So long as they are prepared on future occasions to reduce themselves to a nullity whenever it is desired for them to do so, no one will care to attack them. But it is quite certain that with the House of Commons growing more democratic and more in sympathy with the people every year, the interference of the Lords—the hostile action, in other words, of a chamber which possesses a permanent anti-popular majority—will not be tolerated as heretofore." \*

Let us pass to the question of Ireland, which played so decisive a part in Mr. Chamberlain's subsequent career. Mr. Chamberlain was a bold critic of British administration in Ireland, and

\* *Radical Programme*, page 19.

on a well-remembered occasion after the introduction of Mr. Gladstone's first Irish Bill, he declared that he was "a Home Ruler before Mr. Gladstone." The "Radical Programme," which was published in July 1885, outlines a scheme of County Boards and National Councils for the different parts of the United Kingdom. Ireland and Scotland were both to have such Councils, and Wales also, if she desired it. They were "either to be chosen directly by the rate-payers of the kingdom, or to consist of members elected by the County Boards, or, rather, by the representatives of owners and occupiers respectively on these Boards." To the first Council was to be given "the work performed by the Irish Local Government Board, the Irish Education Boards, the Irish Board of Works, the Fishery Board, and similar bodies." Speaking at Glasgow on September 15, Mr. Chamberlain further defined his attitude :—

"I have proposed that there should be established in Ireland and in Scotland, perhaps also in Wales and in England, National Councils for dealing with affairs which, although they are National, are yet not of Imperial concern. I have thought that to such Councils might be referred the local control and administration which is now exercised by official Boards in



Dublin and in Edinburgh, and by the Departments of the Government in London. Perhaps that would be as far as it would be wise to go in the first instance ; but if these Councils were approved, if the work were satisfactory, then I think we might hereafter even go further, and we might entrust to them the duty of preparing legislation—legislation on National as contrasted with Imperial interests.”

It is true that Mr. Chamberlain used other and vaguer words which seemed to stamp him as a sympathizer with Irish Nationalism. “The existing system of rule in Ireland,” he said, in a speech at Holloway, “is a system which is founded on the bayonets of thirty thousand soldiers encamped permanently as in a hostile country. It is a system as completely centralized and bureaucratic as that with which Russia governs Poland, or as that which was common in Venice under Austrian rule.” The Polish illustration had been used earlier in the House of Commons, and a biographer of Mr. Chamberlain’s quotes Mr. Chaplin as having said that “there were looks of black dismay on the Treasury Bench when he gave utterance to that very foolish and painful statement.” Much else might be quoted from Mr. Chamberlain’s speeches which gave encouragement to

Irish Nationalists, and left them under the impression that he was prepared to go a long way, if not the whole way, with them. But if we descend from rhetoric to actual proposals the passage quoted above from the Glasgow speech is his high-water mark. In his *Life of Parnell*, Mr. Barry O'Brien has left us the record of a profoundly interesting interview in which Mr. Chamberlain speaks for himself concerning his views on the Irish question, and his relations with the Nationalists. It was he, he tells us, who negotiated the famous Kilmainham Treaty in 1883; it was he, again, who was the chief advocate of a new Irish policy in the Cabinet before Mr. Gladstone's resignation in 1885. The National Councils scheme, in fact, was actually submitted to the Cabinet and rejected by it, though Mr. Gladstone was "quite in favour of it." (This is confirmed in Lord Morley's *Life*.) "The very men," says Mr. Chamberlain, "who afterwards were in favour of a Parliament for Ireland opposed the National Councils Bill most vigorously, and caused its defeat. There never was such a *volte-face*. Mr. Gladstone was very vexed. When that scheme was rejected I did not care how soon the Government went out. We were thrown out in June 1885, and I was very glad. It

left me free. Then I took up the Irish question." There came, however, a check within the next few weeks, a check from the Irish leader himself. Mr. Chamberlain goes on to explain that when he made the Holloway speech it was arranged that he and Sir Charles Dilke should go to Ireland, and "lay the policy (of National Councils) before the people." He was "free" by this time of colleagues who had rejected his scheme in the Cabinet. "Then suddenly," he tells us, "our plans were overturned. A statement was made to me that Parnell no longer wished us to go to Ireland, and that he would not have our scheme now; that he had got something better. At this time I believe he was in touch with Lord Carnarvon and the Tories." \* Mr. Chamberlain adds that he had no complaint to make of Parnell. "We acted as politicians. He was doing what he thought the best he could for his cause; I was doing the best I could according to my opinions." Nevertheless, it followed almost inevitably that the Irish question dropped into the background in the Radical propaganda, and the references to it are few and slight in the speeches of the autumn.

\* *Life of Charles Stewart Parnell*, by Barry O'Brien, II., 36, 137.

There is nothing in Mr. Chamberlain's speeches which can convict him of any tergiversation in withholding his support from Mr. Gladstone's Home Rule Bill of 1886. If he was a Home Ruler before Mr. Gladstone, he had never committed himself to Mr. Gladstone's type of Home Rule. On the contrary, he had a scheme of his own which, if in one way more drastic, since it applied to Scotland and Wales as well as Ireland, was in its purely Irish aspects much more guarded than Mr. Gladstone's scheme. He was therefore at liberty on his own record to oppose Mr. Gladstone, and his consistency can be proved by an argument which is logically complete. Yet it is scarcely surprising if his Radical friends assumed that, having gone so much further on the Irish road than most of his colleagues in the Government of 1880—having, in fact, been a pioneer of Irish Government reform while it was a despised and unpopular cause—he would take the few more steps which would bring him into line with Mr. Gladstone. Looking back on the whole affair, we may say that Mr. Parnell never made a greater mistake than when he vetoed Mr. Chamberlain's visit to Ireland in the summer of 1885, nor Mr. Gladstone when he failed to appraise Mr. Chamberlain's influence with the country, and the



formidableness of his opposition. The Radical leader, as the event was quickly to prove, was no half-and-half opponent when the die was cast. If for a moment he parleyed about the inclusion or exclusion of the Irish member, it was, as he said frankly to Mr. Barry O'Brien in after years, because he "wanted to kill the Bill," \* and was willing to use any convenient weapon for that purpose. His former colleagues complained that he was more bitter than the Conservative Opposition in his denunciation of Mr. Gladstone and the Irish Party. The truth was simply that the keen blade which had hitherto been used in their service was turned against them, and for the first time they felt its edge and its power of wounding. From the beginning of his career to the end it was a principle of Mr. Chamberlain's that you must be with one party or the other, and if with one party, then whole-heartedly against the other. When once he had cut off his means of retreat into Mr. Gladstone's camp, it was certain that no sentimental regard for old friends would be allowed to weaken his power and effectiveness as a fighting politician. To Mr. Chamberlain, as to Parnell, public life was an arena, and not a tea-party.

\* *Life of Parnell*, II., 140.

But here I am going beyond the scope of this chapter. Let me add a few remaining characteristics of the "Radical Programme." The special knowledge which Mr. Chamberlain brought into politics was derived from a long experience as Town Councillor and Mayor of Birmingham. The Cockney, as Lord Salisbury called him, was at least on sure ground when he was talking about the housing of the poor, and we find the chapter on that subject in the "Radical Programme" illustrated by examples from Birmingham. The main obstacle to improvement was, he insisted, the cost of litigation before an area could be cleared, and the special compensation over fair market values allowed to owners for compulsory sale. The local authority must, therefore, be empowered to acquire lands or buildings compulsorily at such a price as "a willing seller would obtain in the open market from a private purchaser, with no allowance for prospective value or compulsory sale." And "the expense of making towns habitable for the toilers who dwell in them must be thrown on the land which their toil makes valuable without any effort on the part of its owners." Mr. Chamberlain admitted, but scarcely developed, the doctrine of the "unearned increment." The "Radical Programme"

suggests rather tentatively (page 88) that not only might the necessity for local taxation be superseded, but that a constantly increasing surplus might be yielded for the benefit of the community if local authorities had "power to acquire the fee simple of their entire district, paying a fair purchase price for their property, and to lease for suitable periods and on statutory terms." If that remains one of the unfulfilled aspirations of the old Birmingham Radicalism, later days have at least seen the "unearned increment" principle in operation.

It is impossible to look back on this "Unauthorized Programme" without a feeling of respect for its author and those who worked with him. They brought an immense zeal and industry to their task. There was something for everybody in their proposals; they had made a survey of the community, and asked of each class in turn what were its needs. They had looked abroad for illustrations, and—a curious hint of things to come—were already alive to the experiments in social legislation being made in the Colonies. Their idea of politics was perhaps a shade too precise and mechanical. This or that was Radicalism—the rest was Whiggery or Toryism; and Radicalism was what the country wanted. So they argued,

and there never was the slightest mistake about their meaning. The atmosphere in which they worked was hard and clear, and though their language was emphatic, it was seldom or never sentimental. Mr. Chamberlain's oratorical style was exactly suited to his subject and method. It was lucid and business-like in its exposition, short and sharp in its attack, unerring in its aim. You felt as you listened that here was a man who knew exactly what he meant to say, and could reduce the most stubborn and complicated material to a sequence of definite propositions. The rich and varied effects by which Mr. Gladstone cast a glamour over his hearers, and the imagery by which he kindled their emotions, were not within Mr. Chamberlain's range. But within his limits he was the most effective speaker of his time. No one engineered his speech so well, no one had his subject so completely at his fingers' ends, or was so perfectly primed with facts and illustrations. I had the good fortune to hear several of his most important speeches during the year 1885, and after twenty years and more the memory of them remains clear and vivid. He had not yet quite the restraint and self-confidence of later years; his manner was more youthful and emphatic. But then, as later, one felt the



charm of the clear low voice and of that expressive lack of expression in the face, which yielded only to a faint smile or slight curl of the lip, as the trenchant sentence drew to its extremely pointed conclusion. The sting was always in the tail of Mr. Chamberlain's sentences.

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Having thus endeavoured to fix in our minds the leading ideas of the Radical policy, let us return to Mr. Chamberlain's relations with his colleagues and the Liberal Party.

The year 1882 was not far advanced before it became clear to the more careful observers of affairs that there were differences in the Cabinet. Mr. Chamberlain and Sir Charles Dilke were not at one with Mr. Forster about Irish policy. They disliked Coercion, and believed in the possibility of making terms with Parnell; while he considered that his hands were weakened in his daily struggle with agrarian agitators by sentimental objections to the use of force. Forster, as all the world knows, broke away from the Government on the Kilmainham Treaty in which Mr. Chamberlain played a leading part. The first split, therefore, was not between Radical and Whig, but between the two men who at the formation of the Government were both sup-

posed to represent the Radical group. Forster, as we may gather from Sir Wemyss Reid's biography, considered himself to have been badly treated by his Radical colleague; but at this distance of time we may say that the differences between the two men were differences of temperament and principle, which reflected no discredit on either of them. Contemporary gossip said that Mr. Chamberlain desired to succeed Forster in Ireland, in which case he and not Lord Frederick Cavendish might have faced the assassins in the Phoenix Park.

We get a curious hint of a characteristic which was to develop in later life in an assurance which Mr. Gladstone gave the Queen on the reconstruction of the Government in 1882. Her Majesty had objected that the Radical element was unduly strengthened by the admission of Sir Charles Dilke, and apparently she entertained special fears about the influence which he and Mr. Chamberlain might exercise upon foreign affairs. Mr. Gladstone replied that though Mr. Chamberlain "had not yet, like Mr. Bright, undergone the mollifying influence of age and experience, his leanings on foreign policy would be far more acceptable to her Majesty than those of Mr. Bright, while his views were not known to be any more demo-

eratic in principle.” \* More than once, during the next few years, it was to be reported that he was “almost the greatest Jingo” † in the Cabinet, and occasionally he used language in his public speeches which was extremely distasteful to the Peace party. This, however, was not accepted by the Whigs as any consolation for the audacity and independence of his speeches on domestic politics. Their uneasiness increased with every speech that he made in the country, and from the beginning of 1883 onwards they were in a chronic state of protest. On March 30, in a speech at Birmingham, he described Lord Salisbury “as the spokesman of a class who toil not neither do they spin, and whose fortunes, as in his case, have originated in grants made long ago for such services as courtiers render kings, and have grown and increased, while their owners slept, by the levy of an unearned share on all that other men have done by toil and labour to add to the general wealth and prosperity of the country of which they form a part.” This was said in retort to some stinging observations of Lord Salisbury’s own; but it was a note which had

\* *The Life of Gladstone*, III., 100.

† Lord Granville to Lord Spencer, June 22, 1882. *Life of Lord Granville*, II.

not been heard in public life since the days of the Chartists, and it was thought inexpressibly shocking in a Cabinet Minister. Matters came to a climax a few weeks later, when, as already related, Mr. Chamberlain took advantage of the Bright celebration to launch an advanced programme of his own. By this time the Court was up in arms, and we may see from a letter to Sir Henry Ponsonby, published in Lord Morley's *Life*, what trouble the Prime Minister had to keep the peace. "I must say at once," writes Mr. Gladstone, "that I have read the speech with deep regret. . . . It is open to exception from three points of view, as I think—first in relation to Bright; secondly, in relation to the Cabinet; thirdly, and most especially, in relation to the Crown, to which the speech did not indicate the consciousness of his holding any special relation." \* Mr. Chamberlain appears to have promised to make amends in a speech which he was shortly to make to the Cobden Club; but that, when it came, made matters no better. Instead of explaining away or toning down his previous utterance, Mr. Chamberlain advanced large claims for freedom of speech in spite of Cabinet obligations. "He admits without stint," said

\* *Life of Gladstone*, III., 112.



Mr. Gladstone in a letter to Lord Granville, "that in a Cabinet concessions may be made as to action, but he seems to claim an unlimited liberty of speech. Now, I should be as far as possible from asserting that under all circumstances speech must be confined within the exact limits to which action is tied down. But I think the dignity and authority, not to say the honour and integrity, of Government require that the liberty of speaking beyond those limits should be exercised sparingly, reluctantly, and with much modesty and reserve; whereas Chamberlain's Birmingham speech exceeded it largely, gratuitously, and with a total absence of recognition of the fact that he was not an individual but a member of a body." \* This is the strongest censure on Mr. Gladstone's part that is recorded. At other times he made generous allowance for a young and zealous colleague with whom he often found himself in agreement. Writing to the Duke of Argyll in the autumn of 1885 † he spoke faithfully of "the conduct of timid or reactionary Whigs," who "make it day by day more difficult to maintain that most valuable characteristic of our history which has always exhibited a

\* *Life of Gladstone*, III., 113.

† *Ibid.*, 221.

good proportion of our great houses at the head of the Liberal movement." In the differences between Whigs and Radicals in the Cabinet he tried his utmost with unfailing good temper to abate the prejudices of the former as well as to control the precipitancy of the latter. But then, and later, his chief criticism of Mr. Chamberlain was that he did not understand the constitutional tradition which required members of the same Cabinet to keep in line, and to shoulder each other's burdens.

We need not follow these controversies through all their ramifications. The differences in the Cabinet appear to have been chronic during the next few years, and when the Government fell in June 1885, its leading members openly expressed their satisfaction at being relieved of the strain of endeavouring to preserve an outward show of unity. Through all these months Mr. Chamberlain's popularity increased by leaps and bounds. He had in a supreme degree the faculty of drawing the enemy's fire. Lord Salisbury and Lord Randolph Churchill engaged him in single combat, and got as good as they gave. He was the storm-centre in the agitation against the House of Lords on the Franchise, and once more he used language which made the Court despair

and the Whig Peers shudder. He was the bogey of all good Conservatives, and Lady Randolph Churchill has recorded how she was solemnly rebuked by her father-in-law for asking to her table "a man who was a Socialist, or not far from one, and who was reputed to have refused to drink the Queen's health when Mayor of Birmingham." The controversy over the Aston riots added fuel to these flames, and the language used on both sides was racy and forcible to a degree not equalled in any subsequent encounters. When the break-up came, and the various groups on the Liberal side were free to speak without restraint, Mr. Chamberlain, as we have already seen, delivered himself about certain of his old colleagues with a freedom and frankness which was appropriate to a quarrel between friends. The breach between right and left wings seemed past mending when the election came on. The borough elections were unfavourable to the Government, and the Whigs cried in chorus, "We told you so." On December 3, in the interval between the borough and the county elections, Mr. Chamberlain delivered a speech at Leicester in which he declared that so far from the losses being due to the extremists, they had occurred precisely because the election had been fought not

on their programme, but on a manifesto that excluded certain proposals to which they attached the greatest importance. Lord Hartington answered at once from Matlock that the moment was ill-chosen for an expression of doubt by a prominent Liberal as to the wisdom of a policy accepted by the party and promulgated by its acknowledged leader. When, added Lord Hartington, "the party had found some more tried, more trusted, more worthy leader, it might be time to impugn the policy." But for the great change of issue which transformed politics in the next few weeks, it is doubtful whether Mr. Chamberlain and Lord Hartington would ever have served together again in the same Government.

To complete this part of the narrative, a word more must be added about Mr. Chamberlain's relations with Mr. Gladstone. On September 12, 1885, we find Mr. Gladstone writing to Sir William Harcourt that he was throwing his thoughts into order for an address to his constituents against the coming dissolution, to be written "with my best care to avoid treading on the toes of either the right or the left wing." He had communicated,\* he went on to say, with Granville, Hartington, and Cham-

\* *Life of Gladstone*, III., 219.



berlain, and by both of the two latter he had been a good deal buffeted; and having explained the general idea with which he proposed to write, he asked each of the pair whether on the whole their wish was that he should go on or cut out. "To this question I have not yet got a clear affirmative answer from either of them." Lord Hartington was doubtful as to the capacity of the "grand old umbrella" to shelter both of them; Mr. Chamberlain was sore at the threatened exclusion of certain points in the unauthorized programme. Since the eventful Cabinet of June, Mr. Gladstone had found a bond of sympathy with Mr. Chamberlain in the Irish question; but the "Unauthorized Programme" undoubtedly exhibited some of the socialistic tendencies which, as he said on another occasion, were estranging him from the Radical Party. Moreover, Mr. Gladstone was not then, or ever, of the temperament which easily tolerated a challenge to his authority, and he held Conservative views of Cabinet etiquette which were scarcely intelligible to the new school. On October 7, Mr. Chamberlain paid his first and last visit to Hawarden, and he and Mr. Gladstone appear to have had much frank conversation, the record of which will be found in the letters to Lord Granville, published

in Lord Morley's *Life*.\* The upshot was that Mr. Chamberlain stood firm for the inclusion of "compulsory expropriation" in the programme of the party, and for his own freedom of action on free education; that he was "pretty well agreed" with his chief on the Irish question, and that he saw great difficulties in serving under Lord Hartington in the case of Mr. Gladstone's retirement. Mr. George Russell has told us that this visit was due to his suggestion made some time between October 2 and October 6, when he himself was a visitor at Hawarden. Mr. Gladstone, he says, "could not have looked more amazed if I had suggested inviting the Shah or the Sultan," for he "had no conception of Mr. Chamberlain's popularity, capacity, and ascendancy over the Radical part of the party." However this may be, Mr. Gladstone immediately acted on the suggestion, and telegraphed an invitation, which was accepted at once, and Mr. Chamberlain was at Hawarden as soon as Mr. Russell had left. There is little or no trace in the letters to Lord Granville of the "acute disagreement" which Mr. Russell tells us was revealed between the two men. "Chamberlain is a good man to talk to," writes Mr. Gladstone, "not only from his force and

\* *Life of Gladstone*, III., 224.

clearness, but because he speaks with reflection, does not misapprehend or (I think) suspect, or make unnecessary difficulties, or endeavour to maintain pedantically the uniformity and consistency of his argument throughout." No one, I think, can read Lord Morley's narrative without coming to the conclusion that throughout this difficult period Mr. Gladstone "used his best care," as he said to Sir William Harcourt, "to avoid treading on the toes of either the right wing or the left wing." But Mr. Russell undoubtedly hits the truth when he says that Mr. Gladstone failed to appraise his younger colleague's political value. Like Lord Salisbury in later years, he worked with an inner circle of intimates in which Mr. Chamberlain was not included, and at the age of seventy-six his vision was closed to the new stars from the outer firmament. Secretaryships of State and other great prizes were for the old and experienced, the men who had served long and learnt the tradition. In the meantime he assumed too readily that Mr. Chamberlain, being of the advanced school on Irish policy, and having proposed the most novel and daring of all the schemes yet dreamt of by practical men for the reconstruction of Irish government, could be relied on to follow

him into Home Rule. In that he was mistaken, and we are left to conjecture whether the result could have been otherwise, even if he had recognized the place which Mr. Chamberlain had won for himself in the country, and had taken him into his confidence, as he afterwards took Mr. Morley.

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“Mr. Gladstone committed the greatest offence a statesman is capable of—he broke up his party.” I remember vividly hearing these words come sharp and emphatic from Mr. Chamberlain’s lips some thirteen years after the last of the events recorded in this chapter. He was almost alone in a little company of political opponents at the dinner table of an old friend, and he spoke, as was his wont, with great freedom and animation. His challenge was picked up, and the example of Peel was instantly thrown back at him; but he brushed it aside as if to say that Peel was as great a sinner. “Surely,” remonstrated our host, “that is very intolerant, and from you of all men; for if Mr. Gladstone hadn’t broken up the Liberal Party you would have.” “Not a bit of it,” came the answer; “that is exactly the mistake which you all made. I should not have broken up the party, I should have strength-



ened the party by dropping the Whigs, and I should have carried not one but two or three unauthorized programmes. The proof is that I got my 'Unauthorized Programme' out of the Unionist Party—Whigs and Tories combined." From this the talk strayed into what might have been, and Mr. Chamberlain, I remember, left on us the impression that he considered the later part of his career to have been but a second-best compared with his early ambitions. There was only one post in public life in which a man could really do what he liked if only for a short time, and that was the post of Prime Minister, which would never be his. He looked that in the face, and was under no illusion about it. He had lost it irretrievably when he broke with the Liberal Party. What remained was necessarily opportunism. He had either to go out of politics, or to get what he could by giving what in a perfect world he would rather have withheld. So speaking, he launched out into a vigorous and interesting defence of the good kind of opportunism, as contrasted with the bad, and claimed that his own action in turning to the Whigs and Tories when he had lost his place among the Liberals was justified by every canon of political morality, even though he still held the Radical opinions of his early

days. In some of his speeches about this time he had seemed to speak as if his Radicalism was a thing of the past ; but the impression left on those who heard him that evening was, I remember well, that he cherished a real affection for his Radical self, and looked back regretfully to the untoward circumstances which had stifled that part of his personality and deflected his career to ends not destined for it. This, however, was before the last and most conspicuous stage in his career.

## MR. CHAMBERLAIN AND HOME RULE.

BY SIR HENRY LUCY.

**O**F Mr. Chamberlain during the years following on his physical collapse after the triumphal progress through Birmingham that marked the celebration of his seventieth birthday, it might have been said that, though (politically) dead, he yet speaketh. Himself withdrawn from the hurly-burly, the fight of political parties raged round the standard of Tariff Reform which he, single-handed, had set up. That is an issue still undetermined. But through the greater half of a Session, Parliament was engaged in legislating upon the question of Old Age Pensions, a matter he first brought within the range of practical politics. It is true the cry raised on the eve of a General Election was not pursued when the Government of which Mr. Chamberlain was a prop was reinstated in power. The fact remains that he first fixed public attention on the ques-

tion, which some years later a Liberal Administration vigorously took in hand, removing it from the region of controversy to the safe harbour of the Statute Book.

These facts are of themselves sufficient to establish the rare personal influence of the statesman. Transcending them in importance is the fact, which it is proposed to demonstrate in these pages—that, but for Mr. Chamberlain, the Home Rule Bill would have been carried through the House of Commons in 1886. It is true he had powerful collaboration. Mr. Bright and Lord Hartington did yeoman service in what they regarded as a struggle involving the integrity of the Empire. Had Mr. Chamberlain stood by Mr. Gladstone, the united effort of the hereditary Radical and the born Whig would have been futile. The Radical wing of the Liberal Party, obedient to the lead of their acknowledged chief, would have eschewed revolt. The Home Rule Bill would have been carried through the Commons, and the Unionist party, with all its domination through a period of fifteen years' work meant for the Empire, would never have existed.

A situation which culminated in the spectacle of Mr. Chamberlain becoming a colleague of Lord Salisbury, the corner-stone of a Conserva-



tive Cabinet, the idol of the class who toil not neither do they spin, is rendered more striking by the circumstance that amongst Mr. Gladstone's colleagues the first man who insisted upon the right of Ireland to have conferred upon it a liberal extension of Local Government was Mr. Chamberlain. In the spring of 1885, Mr. Gladstone proposing to give precedence to an Irish Land Purchase Bill over one dealing with Local Government, Mr. Chamberlain and Sir Charles Dilke resigned. They demanded as a minimum price of continuing in office that when the Land Purchase Bill was introduced it should be accompanied by definite assurances that the problem of Irish Local Government would forthwith be grappled with.

Mr. Chamberlain's position on the question at this epoch is defined with his usual lucidity. Addressing his constituents on June 17, 1885, he said : " The pacification of Ireland at this moment depends, I believe, in the concession to Ireland of the right to govern itself in the matter of its purely domestic business. Is it not discreditable to us that even now it is only by unconstitutional means we are able to secure peace and order in one of her Majesty's dominions ? It is a system as completely centralized as that with which Russia governs

Poland, or as that which prevailed in Venice under Austrian rule. An Irishman at this moment cannot move a step, cannot lift a finger, in any parochial, municipal, or educational work without being confronted with, interfered with, controlled by, an English official appointed by a foreign Government without shade or shadow of representative authority."

Here, surely, was the man to whom distressed Ireland might look for deliverance. Mr. Chamberlain's sympathy with what was known as the Nationalist movement was not displayed for the first time in this deliberate utterance. Throughout his Ministerial career he had been a resolute opponent of Coercion. On this ground he bitterly fought, absolutely routed, Mr. Forster. It was no secret that he was the prime mover in what came to be known as the Kilmainham Treaty. To him Captain O'Shea, unknowing of a household tragedy even then gathering in storm, repaired as emissary of the Irish leader, at the time prisoner of the Chief Secretary. It was he who became the medium of communication between Parnell and the Cabinet.

When Lord Frederick Cavendish was murdered within sight of the Viceregal Lodge on the afternoon of the day he carried the olive

branch to Ireland, Mr. Chamberlain, with characteristic courage and confidence, made up his mind to take his place. Here was another of those turns on the road which, had it not been passed by, might have transformed home politics. Had Mr. Chamberlain become Chief Secretary to the Lord-Lieutenant in 1882, even if he had not within the limits of the sitting Parliament carried legislation dealing with Local Government in Ireland, he would have been so deeply committed to the principle, so far tied and bound to Mr. Gladstone, that it would have been impossible for him to assume the attitude taken by him when, four years later, crisis came. Mr. Gladstone never fully trusted his energetic, imperiously-willed colleague. "The daring duckling" of the Cabinet, accustomed to set forth on excursions of its own invention, makes a figure of interest in public life. But it is not regarded with unmixed feelings of affection in the family pond. Ignoring Mr. Chamberlain's unconcealed desire, the Premier sent Mr. George Trevelyan to Dublin Castle. It would be too much to say that this episode] influenced Mr. Chamberlain's action towards Mr. Gladstone and his Irish policy in 1886. Those who knew him intimately know best that he was not a man disposed to forget a personal slight.

Mr. Gladstone's commentary on this episode is interesting. In a private memorandum written in 1886, reviewing the inner history of his defeated Bill, he writes: "It was stated that he (Chamberlain) coveted the Irish Secretaryship. To have given him the office would at that time have been held to be a declaration of war against the Irish Party." There seems to be here some misapprehension of Mr. Chamberlain's precise position. As we have seen, he had been chiefly instrumental in unseating the man whom the Parnellites regarded as their bitterest enemy—"Buckshot" Forster. He had been the pivot round which moved the negotiation of the Kilmainham Treaty.

I have personal recollection of an incident that throws light on the dark places of the epoch. Immediately on the vacancy occurring in the Irish Office, Mr. Chamberlain, then President of the Board of Trade, entered into personal communication not only with the leader, but with the rank and file of the Irish Party. At that time, so bitter was feeling in the House against what in 1886 Mr. Bright, writing to Mr. Gladstone, repeatedly referred to as "the Rebel Party," that it was a rare thing to find an English member in personal communication with a Parnellite. For certain reasons, one



Philip Callan was held in particular detestation by those concerned for the reputation of the House. At the time succession to the Chief Secretaryship was in abeyance Richard Power, the Irish Whip, laughingly showed me a snapshot taken on the Terrace, showing Mr. Chamberlain with his arm affectionately linked in that of Phil Callan, whom he was earnestly addressing.

In 1885, within twelve months of his final secession from the leadership of Mr. Gladstone, Mr. Chamberlain took a step which testified afresh to his sympathy with the Nationalist Party, and his desire to aid them in accomplishing their desire. He proposed, in conjunction with Sir Charles Dilke, to make what Lord Morley describes as "a political tour in Ireland, with Mr. Parnell's approval, and under his auspices." This was a final move to force the hand of Mr. Gladstone, partly paralyzed on the Home Rule question by former colleagues in the Cabinet whom Mr. Chamberlain, in the course of the campaign in which he carried through the country the fiery cross of the "Unauthorized Programme," genially alluded to as Rip Van Winkle and the Skeleton at the Feast. At first the Irish leader was disposed to accept this alliance. On reflection he seems to have

come to the conclusion that direction of the campaign were better left entirely in his own hands. He accordingly discouraged the overture, and once more by secret unrecognized currents Mr. Chamberlain drifted aside from final commitment to the Home Rule campaign.

On June 8, 1885, what was a happy release for a distracted Cabinet and a much-worried Premier came in the form of defeat in the House of Commons. It was brought about by a significant combination. Sir Michael Hicks-Beach moved an amendment on the Budget Resolutions ostensibly raising a fiscal question. Actually it was a strategic movement taken with the assurance that the Parnellites would lend a helping hand to turn out a Government responsible for a Coercion Bill. The result justified expectation. Tories and Irish Home Rulers uniting their forces beat the Government by 264 votes against 252, an event celebrated by Lord Randolph Churchill jumping upon the corner seat of the bench below the gangway and waving his hat with boyish enthusiasm. Having more patiently and audaciously than any one else worked for this triumph, he was justified in sounding the trumpet and beating the drum.

Mr. Gladstone forthwith placed his resignation

in the hands of the Queen. Lord Salisbury was by no means willing to undertake office held from day to day at the will of the Parnellites. After some parleying with the object of inducing Mr. Gladstone to carry on his Administration, Lord Salisbury formed a Government, one of whose earliest acts was to dissolve Parliament. The General Election that followed reinstated Mr. Gladstone in a splendid position. His following numbered 334, whilst of Conservatives there were 250, of Parnellites 86. In his spoken and written appeals to the country Mr. Gladstone urged the necessity of having at his command a majority that would place him in a position of independence in view of renewed coalition between Tories and Irish Nationalists. This hope was realized within two of the necessary number. It was magnificent. But it did not suffice, and lack of autocratic power was responsible for damaging temporizing when in due time the Home Rule Bill came to be framed.

Though in a hopeless minority, Lord Salisbury did not immediately resign. He met Parliament conscious of being at the mercy of any combined movement that might be made by the Liberals and the serried phalanx of the Nationalists. Whenever, upon whatso-

ever issue, these two powers joined hands, his Government must be swept away. Crisis was not long delayed. Among amendments to the Address was one moved by Mr. Jesse Collings, claiming for the agricultural labourer assistance that came to be known as the guerdon of "Three Acres and a Cow." On a division, which took place on January 26, the Parnellites, Premier-makers as absolutely as in his time Warwick was king-maker, turned upon their allies of the previous June, and the Conservatives were defeated by 329 against 250, a majority of four-score less one. Thus passed away what Mr. Chamberlain in happy phrase derided as the "Stop-gap Government." None dreamed of the portentous events that would in equally brief time trip up the steps of its successor.

In the interval momentous matters had happened, for the most part behind the veil that hides the private correspondence and conversation of Ministers and ex-Ministers. Mr. Chamberlain, though alert and suspicious, still remained on friendly terms with his chief. In the first week of October he spent two days with him at Hawarden, where the prospects and conditions of forming a Liberal Government were closely discussed.

"Chamberlain came here yesterday, and I



have had a great deal of conversation with him," Mr. Gladstone writes to Lord Granville under date October 8, 1885. "He is a good man to talk to, not only from his force and clearness, but because he speaks with reflection, does not misapprehend or (I think) suspect or make unnecessary difficulties, or endeavour to maintain pedantically the uniformity and consistency of his argument throughout."

Whilst matters seemed to be going smoothly with Mr. Chamberlain, Lord Hartington was jibbing with increasing vigour. In December a strange—for Mr. Gladstone's plan of campaign a disastrous—portent appeared in the sky. It came to be known as the "Hawarden Kite." In the form of a newspaper paragraph, announcement was made with air of authority that Mr. Gladstone, converted to Home Rule principles, would, at the earliest opportunity, introduce a Bill creating an Irish Parliament. The name mockingly given to this announcement, which appeared simultaneously in a London and Leeds paper, indicated what was the general opinion—that the rumour was floated at Mr. Gladstone's personal instance with the object of founding public opinion on the matter. Nothing could be more remote from the fact. In degree the incident was as hurtful to him as

was the Jameson Raid ruinous to the plans of Cecil Rhodes. It "upset his apple-cart."

Ever since the result of the General Election had placed power in his hands, he had studiously refrained, even in private correspondence with his colleagues, from definitely stating his views and plans on the question of Irish Local Government. His avowed position was that the initiative lay with Lord Salisbury, who still retained office. It was for him to move, whether in direction of the line taken by his colleague Lord Carnarvon in his historic interview with Mr. Parnell, or by relapse into Coercion. This well-considered plan of campaign was carried to the extent that, meeting Mr. Arthur Balfour at a week-end party in a country house, he, through the nephew, informally submitted to Lord Salisbury a proposal that, assured of cordial co-operation on the part of the dominant Opposition, the Premier should bring in a Bill dealing with Local Government in Ireland. The publication of the fatal paragraph plunged the fat in the fire. It was not only that the Conservatives closed up their ranks and prepared for battle. That Mr. Gladstone would have given them with pleasure. The mischief was that the announcement fluttered the doves of his own flock.

About the middle of December, Lord Hartington, following up earlier correspondence, formally demanded information as to his old chief's views and intentions on the Irish question as developed by the General Election. Reply came in a conciliatory letter, containing a phrase delightfully Gladstonian. "The truth is," Mr. Gladstone wrote, "I have more or less of opinion and ideas, but no intentions or negotiations." Instinctively feeling that with a man of Lord Hartington's straightforward, matter-of-fact way of looking at things, this would hardly do, he descended to particulars of what, again with characteristic caution, he minimized as "an admissible plan." As being the earliest sketch of the Home Rule Bill, these are interesting, and may be briefly summarized: (1) Union of the Empire, and due supremacy of Parliament; (2) Protection for the minority; (3) Fair allocation of Imperial charges; (4) A statutory basis as better and safer than the revival of Grattan's Parliament. "As to intentions," he reiterated, going back to his original declaration, "I am determined to have none at present."

On this very day, December 17, even whilst the letter was being written, the so-called Hawarden Kite appeared in the sky. Lord Hart-

ington straightway wrote a letter addressed to the chairman of his electoral committee, disclaiming knowledge of or participation in the affair. He desired to inform the public that no proposals designed to meet the Irish demand for Home Rule had been communicated to him. "For my own part," he added, "I stand to what I said during the election."

As for Mr. Chamberlain, he met the crisis with accustomed adroitness. It happened that on this momentous day he fulfilled an engagement to address his constituents at the Birmingham Reform Club. "We are," he said, "face to face with a very remarkable demonstration by the Irish people. They have shown that as far as regards the majority of them, they are earnestly in favour of a change in the administration of their government, and of some system that would give them a larger control of their domestic affairs. Well, we ourselves, by our public declarations and by our Liberal principles, are pledged to acknowledge the justice of this claim." That Mr. Chamberlain was fully in accord with Mr. Gladstone's tactics, explained in his letter to Lord Hartington, and shattered by the publication of the paragraph alluded to, appears in a later passage. "Mr. Parnell," he said, "has appealed



to the Tories. Let him settle accounts with his new friends. Let him test their sincerity and goodwill. If he finds he has been deceived, he will approach the Liberal Party in a spirit of reason and conciliation."

Even when Parliament met, Mr. Gladstone attempted to maintain this attitude of waiting upon Providence (represented by Lord Salisbury). Attempt being made to "draw him" in debate on the Address, he repelled it in a passage which added a phrase to the Parliamentary vocabulary. "I intend to reserve my own freedom of action," he said. "There are many who have taken their seats for the first time upon these benches, and I may avail myself of the privilege of old age to offer a recommendation. I would tell them of my own intention to keep my counsel and reserve my own freedom until I see the moment and the occasion when there may be a prospect of public benefit in endeavouring to make a movement forward. I will venture to recommend them, as an old Parliamentary hand, to do the same."

This was a position which could not be long maintained. Lord Salisbury's Government, throwing off the cloak of sympathy with Home Rule aspirations assumed by Lord Carnarvon,

gave notice of intention to bring in a Coercion Bill. This was a challenge flung down on the floor of the House of Commons which the oldest Parliamentary hand could not overlook. Battle was joined on Mr. Jesse Collings's amendment to the Address, and the Stop-gap Government was driven out.

Mr. Gladstone, once more Prime Minister, found himself face to face with the Irish question. In forming a Government he must needs satisfy colleagues in the new Cabinet as to his precise intentions. In this attempt he failed with Lord Hartington. The late Duke of Devonshire was a statesman whose impregnable honesty, unselfish purpose, and shrewdness of judgment counterbalanced in the public eye lack of the meretricious gift of platform or Parliamentary oratory. Mr. Bright reluctantly stood aside, for ever parted from the long-time colleague who had hitherto enjoyed his fullest confidence. Sir Henry James, later Lord James of Hereford, was not to be tempted to sin against his conscience by the prize of the Woolsack dangled within his reach. It was less of a surprise that Mr. Goschen, Lord Northbrook, and Lord Derby, who a year or two earlier had gone over to the Liberal camp, declined to join a Ministry pledged to bestow upon Ireland a form

of government which, however named, would actually be Home Rule. Mr. Chamberlain, doubtful of the issue, uncertain how far Mr. Gladstone was going, accepted office. Declining the Admiralty pressed upon him, he selected the comparatively second-rate position of President of the Local Government Board.

The hollow truce early showed sign of fracture. On March 13, 1886, Mr. Gladstone in Cabinet Council expounded his scheme. Mr. Chamberlain and Mr. Trevelyan at once expressed their desire to resign, but were overruled by the impetuous remonstrance of the harried Premier. At a second meeting, held a fortnight later, the inevitable happened. Mr. Chamberlain submitted four objections to the proposed Bill. One was directed against the proposal that Irish members having their own Parliament on College Green should not also sit at Westminster. He demurred to the grant of full right of taxation to the Irish Parliament. He viewed with apprehension surrender of the appointments of judges and magistrates. He insisted that instead of enumerating things an Irish Parliament would not be permitted to do, the Bill should specifically define acts they would be authorized to accomplish. Mr. Chamberlain and Mr. Trevelyan forthwith resigned.

Mr. Gladstone, indomitable, filled up their places and went on with his Bill.

It was introduced into the House of Commons on April 8, 1886, amidst a scene of interest and excitement rarely paralleled. No opposition was offered to the First Reading, moved in a speech whose substratum of argumentative force and lofty level of eloquence extorted the admiration alike of friend and foe. Recalling the scene, I remember how the loudest, most unanimous, outburst of applause greeted the proposal of the exclusion of Irish members from Westminster. It is striking evidence of the superficiality of instant judgment of this character that this was the very rock on which was wrecked the barque freighted with Mr. Gladstone's fondest hopes, his final endeavour for what he believed to be the good of the country.

On the Second Reading, Lord Hartington—ominous selection—moved the rejection of the Bill. Up to this stage, whilst the Whig section of the Ministerial Party were in open revolt, the Radicals, massed behind Mr. Chamberlain, had not finally declared their intent. What followed in the four weeks through which the fate of the Bill hung in the balance composes one of the most dramatic episodes in English history. In his monumental *Life of*



*Gladstone*, Lord Morley dismisses the subject with a few general remarks. Being wholly personal, carried on subterraneously, it may not reach the dignity proper to the style of the historian. Nevertheless it made history, shaping the course of public events for the next nineteen years.

I chance to have been made the repository of a private narrative of events at this critical epoch, communicated by the men who on either side had in personal charge negotiations set on foot to avert the threatened split of the Liberal Party. How nearly their object was achieved, by what incomprehensible shortcoming of Mr. Gladstone at a critical moment hope was shattered, appears from a letter addressed to me by Mr. Labouchere, confirmed on salient points by the testimony of Mr. W. S. Caine, the *fidus Achates* of Mr. Chamberlain.

Of the majority returned at the General Election to support Mr. Gladstone, ninety-three had, by speech or letter, declared against Home Rule. Thirty-eight ranked as Whigs under the leadership of Lord Hartington, fifty-five Radicals being in the councils of Mr. Chamberlain. A simple sum in arithmetic showed that if on the Second Reading division the fifty-five returned to their fealty, Mr. Gladstone

might view with unconcern the implacable attitude of the Whigs. Mr. Labouchere, perceiving the bearings of the situation, devoted himself to efforts to save it. The emissary was well chosen, being at that time an intimate personal friend of Mr. Chamberlain, whilst he possessed a full share of such measure of confidence as Mr. Gladstone was accustomed to bestow outside his Cabinet circle. The Premier was prepared to concede two of the four points raised by Mr. Chamberlain in the last Cabinet Council he attended. He would permit Irish members to take part in debate at Westminster on Imperial questions, and would withdraw the cession of full rights of taxation proposed by the Bill to be bestowed upon the Irish Parliament. Armed with this message of peace, Mr. Labouchere had an interview with Mr. Chamberlain, who agreed that upon these conditions he and his friends would support the Second Reading.

This happened on a Saturday. According to Mr. Labouchere's story, Mr. Chamberlain, having accepted the proffered concessions, telegraphed to several of his friends, "Absolute surrender." The news got wind, and a pressman conveying it to Downing Street, with request for confirmation or contradiction, received

a reply which was construed and published as a declaration that Mr. Gladstone had yielded nothing. Hereupon Mr. Chamberlain withdrew into his shell, and negotiations that seemed to have been brought within measurable distance of a happy issue were broken off. In his letter to me, Mr. Labouchere sums up the situation in characteristic directness of phrase :

“Joe,” he wrote, “was foolish in sending the telegram ; but I always thought that G. was most in fault. He did so hate Joe.”

All was not yet lost. An important factor, not fully recognized at the time or since, was that Mr. Chamberlain, whilst, as he declared, “anxious to help national feeling in Ireland in the direction of obtaining a reformed system of Local Government,” was even more concerned to avert the threatened secession from the political party to which his sympathies clung, in whose service he had achieved his commanding position. It is not necessary to adopt Mr. Labouchere’s colloquial phrase in expression of the opinion that Mr. Gladstone, more especially after the excursion with the “Unauthorized Programme,” studiously refrained from conciliating his strenuous colleague. There is a guarded but none the less significant passage illustrative of the condition of things in Lord Morley’s account of

what took place at the last Cabinet Council where the two met, never again to foregather in counsel.

“Some supposed then,” it is written, “and Mr. Chamberlain has said since, that when he [Mr. Chamberlain] entered the Cabinet room on this memorable occasion he intended to be conciliatory. Witnesses of the scene thought that the Prime Minister made little attempt in that direction.”

There remained a final opportunity which, had Mr. Gladstone seized it as was expected, would have closed up the riven ranks. At a meeting of the Liberal Party, held at the Foreign Office on May 27, 1886, Mr. Gladstone undertook that after the Second Reading of the Bill had been carried, it should be dropped, to be brought in again the following year, minus the clause excluding Irish members from Westminster. This was satisfactory to Mr. Chamberlain and his friends. In his letter to me, dated April 25, 1883, Mr. Caine writes: “I was to rise immediately after Mr. Gladstone had concluded his speech moving the Second Reading and say a few platitudes, giving Chamberlain time to consider the concessions made, and deal with them in a formal speech later on. However, the G.O.M. went on and on, and not a word was



said. He sat down without making the smallest concession, much to our astonishment and dismay. Labouchere, who was sitting just below me, turned round as Gladstone sat down, and made the characteristic remark, which has remained in my memory ever since, 'Isn't the Old Man a Thimble-rigger?' "

This extraordinary, still unexplained, procedure finally settled the fate of the Bill. On the eve of the division on the Second Reading, Mr. Chamberlain summoned a meeting of his followers to decide what part they should take in it. One who was present told me that Mr. Chamberlain's attitude at this critical moment was severely judicial. He had neither come to bury Cæsar nor to praise him. There were, he said, adopting a formula familiar from Mr. Gladstone's mouth at great crises, three courses open to them. They might support the Second Reading of the Bill; they might vote against it; they might abstain from voting. He declined to offer advice, confining his remarks to a brief summary of what would happen on adoption of each of the several courses.

On the first division thirty-nine voted against the Second Reading; three declared in its favour; thirteen stood aside. On a second ballot the three who had voted for the Bill

stuck to their guns. Of the abstainers, nine went over to the majority, and the fate of the Government was sealed. Shortly after midnight of the same day the Bill was thrown out by a majority of thirty in a House of 656 members. Of the majority, only 250 were Conservatives. It was the ninety-three dissentient Liberals, the united forces of Mr. Chamberlain and Lord Hartington, who turned the scale.

The Home Rule Bill was dead, not to be revived by the Round Table Conference that took place a few months later, nor resuscitated by a majority of forty placed at Mr. Gladstone's disposal in 1892. After some hesitation Mr. Chamberlain went over bag and baggage to the camp of his ancient foemen, becoming, save in modified effect concerning education, *plus royaliste que le roi*.

## MR. CHAMBERLAIN AS A SOCIAL REFORMER.

BY J. RAMSAY MACDONALD, M.P.

I N 1836, England was still in the ferment of uncertainty which followed the Reform Act and the new Poor Law. The working classes had discovered that the politicians whom the Reform Bill had put into power were but Whig ; a financial crisis was working itself out ; agricultural depression had reached grave depths, and was disturbing the country ; the Corn Law League had just been formed ; the "Hungry Forties," with their fevered agitations, their Chartism, their petitions and riots, their demonstrations and trials for sedition were at hand. *Sartor Resartus* had appeared two years before ; and however apparently foreign to a summary estimate of social impulses, Sir Charles Lyell's *Principles of Geology*, published three years previously, will not be omitted by any one who assigns an important place to intellectual

speculation amongst the forces of national progress. University College received its charter in 1836; the Municipal Corporations Act had just been passed; and in 1836 Mr. Chamberlain was born. The first winter which Mr. Chamberlain saw was one of unusual suffering for the English common people. When he was still in arms, the Tories began to tremble lest a French Revolution might yet be in store for them; the Whigs were splitting into two sections; the Radicals were troubling timorous people; and, most significant of all, the titles of political parties were changing. The Whig was becoming a Liberal, the Tory a Conservative. Mr. Chamberlain came with a new political epoch.

## I.

When eighteen years of age, Mr. Chamberlain went to Birmingham. As a Unitarian and champion of Nonconformity in general, he came under the influence of that extraordinary group of preachers and teachers who then made Birmingham chapels ring with a forcefully practical Christianity—Dr. Dale, Dr. Crosskey, Charles Vince, and George Dawson. “I have given my soul to Christ to look after,” said Dr. Dale once in reply to the Catholic Vicar-Gen-



eral of Birmingham, who had been reproaching him for his secular activities ; " my duty is to do His will." They approached politics with the enthusiasm of men who felt that the transforming action of wise legislation and administration was nothing less worthy than a means of fulfilling the prayer, " Thy kingdom come." They anticipated the political and social theories of a later generation, and stood midway between the Radicalism of the past and the Socialism of the future. No theoretic conception of the function of the State in society, of the relation between the individual and his community, guided them as it has guided the Socialist school of municipal reformers who have followed in their footsteps, and applied their doctrines in other directions. They followed the ethical impulse to action which a living Christianity awoke in them in the midst of social iniquity and human failure. The democratization of forms of government, the removal of the insult offered by aristocracy by its mere existence in a democracy, even the liberation of the Church from the bonds of the State, could not satisfy this kind of enthusiasm for progress. It was human in its aims, and not merely political ; it sought to change the quality of human stuff, and not merely con-

struct the plan of a perfectly-balanced political State.

Now Birmingham abounded in narrow alleys, squalid houses, rotting slums; and the old Town Council, though endowed with ample powers of redress, was in the hands of incompetent and weak men, and its business was often done in the snug parlour of a public-house. "Toward the end of the 'sixties," wrote Dr. Dale, "a few Birmingham men made the discovery that perhaps a strong and able Town Council might do almost as much to improve the conditions of life in the town as Parliament itself." Other places had led the way, but Birmingham followed with distinction. The Town Council at once became invested with new dignity, and seats upon it were sought by men of influence and leading in the city. Civic pride and civic patriotism transformed the November election meetings—often held previously on licensed premises—from dull and badly-attended gatherings called to hear pettifogging speakers mouth about pettifogging civic transactions, to ardent demonstrations addressed by earnest men fired by a municipal ideal. Birmingham became a pride to her citizens. They dreamed of her clean, bright, lying in gardens and parks, providing music, books,

pictures, culture, for her people ; they saw her the controller of her own monopolies, and using the profits to ease the burdens of the ratepayers ; and they worked that the dream might come true.

To George Dawson the revelation of the new municipal gospel came ; but Joseph Chamberlain was its chief apostle. When the work began Birmingham was a town of excessive filth. Gas was about 5s. per thousand cubic feet, and bad at that ; water flowed only for three days a week, and the Company's supply had to be supplemented by carts, which charged at the rate of 10s. per thousand gallons. During these halcyon years the Gas Company was bought out at a cost of £2,000,000 ; the Water Companies went with something like £1,350,000 in their pockets ; drainage was laid and a sewage farm purchased ; the slums in the centre were bought for £1,600,000, raised by private subscription ; and Corporation Street was built where the fever dens had been. The death-rate, which had been 26 per thousand, fell to 20 ; in some districts, where it had been from 60 to 80, it dropped to 20 and 25. In this work Mr. Chamberlain brought the Liberal Association to his aid, because to him the difference between Liberalism and Conservatism was not in name, but

in principle, which clove through municipal politics as clean as it clove through Imperial politics. This was an important departure. It gave Birmingham Liberalism a social programme.

Whoever attempts to understand Mr. Chamberlain's mind whilst his fame and activities were still confined to Birmingham is met first of all by the apparent difficulty that he had changed his principles very suddenly. He had been as a young man an opponent of John Bright, and he steps upon the public stage as an ardent municipal Radical. And yet the difficulty is not real. One consistent characteristic runs like a connecting thread through Mr. Chamberlain's life. His Communal consciousness always explains his opinion and conduct. He had the tribal instinct in him. That is why he was always an Imperialist ; that is why he was an aggressive champion of his " side ; " that is the key to his social reform. In these early days this part of his nature showed itself in his interest in social clubs, Sunday schools, patriotic protests against Mr. Bright's " Little Englandism," and craven anti-nationalist peace doctrines, and it finally blazed up into a devotion to an ideal Birmingham without " spot or wrinkle, or any such thing." His municipal



social reform was his homage to Birmingham—the city of which he was the citizen—rather than to humanity—the idea with which he might have been inspired. His programme of municipalization was rather the gift of a lover to his mistress than the working out of a philosophy of reform. It was none the less effective for that. To-day the wanderer in Birmingham still may explore many mean streets and squalid homes ; there is no imperial loftiness of demeanour about the city ; it no longer stands in the forefront, hardly even in the first rank, of cities famed for municipal enterprise and energy. But question its public opinion, and you will find that it retains the memory of those years, beginning with 1869, when Mr. Chamberlain entered its Council Chamber, and culminating in 1873, when Mr. Chamberlain was Mayor, as a faded beauty dwells upon the days of her triumphs.

This is the first phase of Mr. Chamberlain, Social Reformer. A conception of the city as an organic whole, and of the identity of the citizen and the city, a conception of business principles in civic government, a conception of public dignity—from these came Mr. Chamberlain's ideas of municipal Socialism ; upon these depended the methods he adopted.

## II.

Ambition to sit in Parliament entered Mr. Chamberlain's heart early in his life. Towards the end of the "'sixties" the Radical Party's inspiration came from a detestation of religious and political inequality, and Mr. Chamberlain's earlier speeches were mainly concerned with those subjects. Attacks on the House of Lords and on the Establishment bulked largely in them. Then came the Liberal triumph of 1868, and the reaping of the honours of the last Government of Whigs. Birmingham and its leader became restive. The unpopularity of Whiggish Ministers and the general disappointment felt with the Government stirred Birmingham Radicalism with peculiar force, and Mr. Chamberlain appeared in print in the *Fortnightly Review*\* as an accusing critic and a defender of the policy of splitting Liberal votes at bye-elections. The chief importance of the article for my present purpose, however, is that it is an interesting statement of the political faith he then held. In it one can see how far he still cherished political change as a good thing in itself, and how far he regarded it as a means to a social end.

The article, easy-flowing in style and biting

\* September 1873.

in intent, measured Liberal shortcomings. Mr. Gladstone has not applied his Irish Church principles to England; Mr. Bruce's Licensing Bill has failed; compromise and small things are the reward of a Liberal Government to Liberal electors; the State is in the hands of the "upper and well-to-do classes;" commercial prosperity "has led many to lose sight of the co-existing misery and discontent of a large portion of the population. Wealthy landowners declaim against the agitators who are setting class against class by preaching the scandalous doctrine that ten shillings a week is insufficient for the proper sustenance of a family. Millionaire manufacturers, who have trebled their profits, find it intolerable that this ungrateful workpeople should unite and strike for 10 per cent. advance in wage. A Liberal Ministry listens to the voice of these charmers, and sympathizes with their indignation, and assists them to promote and maintain legislation whose real object they have not the courage to avow, but which is covertly intended to keep labour at the feet of capital, and to leave to property the practical monopoly of political power." The grievances of the wage-earners ought to be sympathetically considered. Their "homes would disgrace a barbarous country;" their

“lack of culture and education leaves them a prey to merely animal instincts ;” they find it “difficult and often impossible to procure the barest necessities of life.” Yet the Act of 1876 has given these people votes. He therefore declares for a free Church, free schools, free land, and free labour. That is the gist of the article. When the Home Rule split came, and he had to face his constituents and win from them a continued support, he said : \* “Fifteen or sixteen years ago I was drawn into politics by my interest in social questions, and by my desire to promote the welfare of the great majority of the population,” and this, the first of many independent political pronouncements and unauthorized programmes, is evidence of that intention. How was he to carry it out ? Upon what system of social causality, of economic justice, of constructive politics, was he to act ? This article enlightens us. Mr. Chamberlain had his ideas pretty well clarified already.

To-day the connection between a free Church and free schools on the one hand, and social reform on the other, is not quite apparent ; but in Mr. Chamberlain’s system the connection was quite clear. He declared, with hard emphasis,

\* Birmingham, April 21, 1886.



that the connection between working-class needs and Nonconformist ecclesiastical ideas arose from the fact that the Church has always been against the people, and Nonconformity always with them, whilst Disendowment offers many opportunities for State activity by putting wealth at the disposal of the public ; education he considered to be a weapon of emancipation in the hands of the wage-earners. His defence of free land proceeded on lines which he elaborated and strengthened in after years. The English land system makes for poverty. It has diminished the supply of food and the demand for labour ; it has steadily lowered the condition of the English peasantry. The remedial proposals were, cheap and ready transfer, the removal of restrictions imposed under primogeniture and entail, tenant right to unexhausted improvements, together with a restoration of the lands filched from common use. By free labour he meant freedom to Trade Unions to conduct their business, an amendment of the Law of Conspiracy, of the Criminal Law Amendment Act, and the abolition of imprisonment for breach of contract where no malicious injury had been intended.

From this programme Mr. Chamberlain hardly budged till 1885. He was a Social Radical.

He stood at a point of our political history when interest in political democracy was beginning to wane but was still strong, when the conception of liberty held by the Liberal school of the nineteenth century was passing out of practical politics, and when the centre of political interests was changing from political forms of liberty to social conditions of liberty ; and Mr. Chamberlain's Radicalism is marked by an energetic attempt to keep the embers of the old alive by blowing upon them with the breath of the new. Behind his attacks on the Lords, on the Establishment, on the Whigs, was the idea that the people in power must produce social legislation which would affect not only the control, but the distribution of property. He accepted the conclusion that the Statute Book of democratic England was to bulk large with property legislation, and that the condition of the people was determined by the action of society and the State, and not merely by the conduct of the individual.

His very earliest pronouncements are singularly clear of any individualist theory of the State. He accepted to the full the idea that the State is a partner with the individual in working out individual salvation. The middle classes and the rich were using their political privileges for their own economic betterment,

and the earliest fault he found with Mr. Gladstone and the Liberal Party was that they were in the hands of rich supporters whose interests were opposed to those of the wage-earners. Later on, he amplified and filled in the details of this opinion. Speaking at the Eighty Club on April 28, 1885, he argued that when the Government was in the hands of the Crown or of a class, its authority should have been restricted because its aims were class, and, therefore, anti-social; but now that it was in the hands of the people, it was proper to extend its functions so as to provide benefits for all which they could not otherwise secure. He hearkened back upon this as late as 1889.\*

This idea of the democratic State having different functions from the middle-class State, and being the custodian of the interests of the economically weak individual, was a favourite one with him. During 1885 in particular he used this thought, and his conclusion always was: "How to promote the greater happiness of the masses of the people; how to increase their enjoyment of life—that is the problem of the future." † Over and over again he referred to

\* Glasgow, February 13, Compare Preface to *Radical Programme* (1885).

† Birmingham, January 5, 1885.

man's natural right to enjoy some competency—which was secured for him when land was held for communal purposes, but which was filched from him when the land was filched from him—being restored by the action of the democratic State resuming its care for individual well-being, and securing that well-being by certain economic changes effected by legislation. The democratic State was to vindicate and protect the “natural right” of the individual. He expressed this quite unequivocally at Birmingham on January 5, 1885, when he said: “If you go back to the early history of our social system you will find that when our social arrangements first began to shape themselves, every man was born into the world with natural rights, with a right to share in the great inheritance of the community, with a right to a part of the land of his birth. But all these rights have passed away. The common rights of ownership have disappeared.” They have been sold, disposed of by persons to whom they did not belong, lost, destroyed by fraud. Nine days later, at Ipswich, he voiced the same doctrine of natural rights and of State function. Harping upon the bygone times, when land was common property, he reflected: “The birthright of the English people has been bart-



ered away for a mess of pottage." Then he proceeded : " What I say is that the community as a whole, co-operating for the benefit of all, may do something to add to the sum of human happiness, may do something to make the life of all its citizens, and, above all, the poorest of them, somewhat better, somewhat nobler, somewhat happier ; " or, as the anonymous writer of the " Radical Programme " expressed it : " The State has too long made itself the champion of the rights of the individual ; it must now assert the rights of the many—of all. If the anti-thesis is badly expressed, the meaning which is intended to be conveyed is plain enough.

The point to notice is that, contrary to the *laissez-faire* view, the State had to do something positive with the man " born without natural rights " of an economic value. It must do more than merely tolerate him. But he went further than that even. The democratic State was not only to protect the weak and the robbed, but was to make property pay for its security. " What ransom will property pay for the security it enjoys ? " he asked, perhaps somewhat jestingly, but still with a definite conception of justice at the back of his mind.\* This was the doctrine of " Ransom." It was a logical and

\* Birmingham, January 5, 1885.

necessary corollary from his theory of "natural right." Property in some things limited that right—indeed, made it disappear. The right of property must therefore be jealously watched by a democratic State. Is it a right of property which allows a foreign speculator to lay two hundred miles of Scottish soil waste?—Are the Game Laws a right of property?—Is the sending of sailors to sea in coffin ships the exercise of the right of property?—are some of the conundrums he put to his audiences and his opponents. The man who thought about "natural rights" as Mr. Chamberlain thought could answer them only by a decided negative.

The reiteration of this doctrine, so essentially Socialist, was bound to bring him into association with that ugly word. The "Radical Programme," to which he wrote a preface, where he stated the Socialist view of the State as it was then evolving—"New conceptions of public duty, new developments of social enterprise, new estimates of the natural obligations of the members of the community to one another have come into view, and demand consideration,"—was written by a person who was at that time, or had been but a short time before, a member of the Social Democratic Federation. True, Mr. Chamberlain was not responsible for this

book, which had appeared as a series of articles in the *Fortnightly Review* anonymously—not so responsible as public rumour assumed then and since. But he praised, both in public and in private, its language and line of thought, and associated himself with it. And in the very first chapter the declaration was made that the reforms that had become necessary “sound the death-knell of the *laissez-faire* system.” He had therefore to declare his relation to the definitely organized Socialist movement which was then making its appearance as a separately organized party in English politics. “I am not a Communist,” he said at Hull on August 5, 1885. “Of course it is Socialism,” he said of his programme a month later at Warrington; and, as I have shown, there is no doubt but that, particularly between 1883 and 1885, the whole trend of his thought was in the direction of the Socialist political State. His critics said so, and he took no trouble to deny the charge. “Every kindly act of legislation by which the community has sought to discharge its responsibilities and its obligations to the poor is Socialism, and it is none the worse for that.” He appeared to be quite prepared to incur the odium of attaching the word to himself and his proposals.

If that was the political philosophy upon which he based his action as a social reformer, what was its economic counterpart? Here again, it must be noted, he constantly assumed up to 1885, at any rate, that it was the organization of society that was at fault, and that succour was to come by a change in the ownership and use of certain forms of property. Just as some politicians want to annex the world, he said, so some men have annexed everything that is worth having, and give only crumbs to others.\* “The great evil with which we have to deal is the excessive inequality in the distribution of riches;” † and on this occasion he proceeded to point out that this has moral *consequences*, although these consequences are sometimes mistaken for causes. The causes upon which he placed emphasis were—lack of local self-government, bad systems of taxation, unjust land laws. He presented the old Radical political programme in terms of economics whenever he could. Its result was to be economic, though its form was political. For instance, the Disestablishment of the Church was to benefit the working-classes mainly by the diversion of its income to public uses. Not until some

\* Birmingham, January 5, 1885.

† Hull, August 5, 1885.



time after his changed political associations familiarized him with new modes of thought did he lay any emphasis upon individual shortcoming as a cause of the unjust distribution of wealth.

This characteristic of his politics cannot be presented with more effectiveness than by referring to his attitude to temperance reform. Early in the 'seventies he had adopted what may be called the collectivist view of this problem, and this is all the more remarkable when it is remembered that alcoholism, of all sources of social evil, appears to be least a matter of social responsibility and most a matter of individual character. When candidate for Sheffield, he had adopted the ordinary Local Veto position, but he had travelled in the company of Mr. Jesse Collings in Sweden during the first recess of his Parliamentary life, and during that tour he had come into touch with the licensing system of Gothenburg. His municipal mind saw a great revelation, and he returned full of an idea which carried the collectivist principles which had guided his whole municipal career into a new field of activity. The Birmingham Town Council agreed in 1877 to his motion in favour of adopting the Gothenburg plan, and in March that year he moved in the House of Commons :—

“That it is desirable to empower the Town Councils of boroughs under the Municipal Corporations Acts to acquire compulsorily, on payment of fair compensation, the existing interests in the retail sale of intoxicating drinks within their respective districts; and thereafter, if they see fit, to carry on the trade for the convenience of the inhabitants, but so that no individual shall have any interest in or derive any profit from the sale.”

In the very opening sentences of the speech he delivered in support of his resolution, he told the House that moral suasion had failed, and “he feared that the evidence would not warrant us in believing that any better results would follow the progress of education than had followed the exercise of moral suasion.” \* The common will and the common interest expressed by the representatives of the people would, he thought, keep this pernicious trade so well within safe bounds that it might be regarded as ministering to public needs without subverting public interests. Both his spirit and the results which he believed would follow from municipalization are well embodied in a speech he made in Birmingham when he said “If I could save half the drunkards of Birming-

\* *Hansard*, March 13, 1877.

nam, if I could relieve them of the consequences of the vice of which they are the prey, if I could increase to that extent the happiness and prosperity of the community by turning publican, I would put on an apron and serve behind a bar to-morrow, and I should say I could not possibly engage in a nobler or more religious work."

But the most definite feature of his economic outlook was his opinions regarding land. He defined them quite plainly in the article in the *Fortnightly* from which I have quoted, and their development and amplification were the cause not only of Mr. Chamberlain's great popularity with the masses, but of the storm of opposition and fear which burst upon him from the Conservative sections. He held to the doctrine that there was at least a *prima facie* case for the public ownership and control of monopolies, as is seen in his speech on the licensing system. Licenses create a monopoly, "and it was not only right but expedient that the benefit of that monopoly should be secured without its evils by transferring the trade to the representatives of the people." Now land is the greatest of all monopolies, and the working of that monopoly is spelt out in poverty and social ruin. In the first place, it enables the owners of land,

“who toil not neither do they spin,” to amass fortunes which grow “whilst their owners slept, by the levy of an unearned share on all that other men have done by toil and labour to add to the general wealth and prosperity of the country of which they form a part.” \* Ground rents have “all grown out of the prosperity and industry of the community.” In addition, political power has gone hand in hand with economic power, and thus a great part of past legislation has been a process of legal robbery of popular rights, the effect of which is most directly and plainly seen in the condition of the agricultural labourer, who “for generations has been oppressed, ignored, defrauded.” †

From 1883 to 1885 this note is struck with an increasing force and skill which culminated in two remarkable speeches in the latter year, that at Glasgow on September 15, and that at Inverness three days later. I still remember, as though it were but yesterday, the thrill of pleasure which went through Radical Scotland when the first speech was delivered. Its bold audacity struck the imagination of the country. We waited with interest and at a high tension for the Inverness pronouncement. The earnest

\* Birmingham, March 30, 1883:

† Ipswich, January 14, 1885.



candour of the man who based his politics upon the fact that one in every thirty people in the country was on the parish, that one in every ten was on the border of starvation, as he had done in Glasgow, and was flaunting the classes with cavalier indifference whilst declaring that for the increase of the material resources of the poor there was "no hope whatever except in the radical revision of the laws which affect the tenure of land," touched the imagination of Radical Scotland. The Celt, with the clan usage of land still moulding his moral consciousness, is naturally incapable even to this day of regarding private property in land as being much more than a form of robbery, and the establishment of deer preserves owned and used by an alien plutocracy, who are regarded in the Highlands as intruders, and are neither welcomed nor respected, only tends to retain these clan prejudices. Mr. Chamberlain's speech at Inverness was therefore no ordinary pronouncement. People flocked to the town from far and near—and they were rewarded. Never was the crofter position better put. He reiterated his doctrines about land ownership. A volcano of fury shot up next morning from the Conservative press, but thousands of hearts were stirred for the coming contest by the joy that at last a man

had appeared who really meant business. No wonder that when Henry George visited Liverpool he advised the people to follow Mr. Chamberlain. But Mr. Chamberlain quite properly repudiated Mr. George; the single tax idea was never Mr. Chamberlain's. He belonged to the school of Socialist land reformers with which Dr. Alfred Russel Wallace stands, rather than to the more individualist school which is faithful to Henry George.

Much less clear than the general principles he held regarding the land were the opinions he had formed regarding the practical application of those principles. Was he in favour of peasant proprietorship and cultivating ownership, or had he in his mind a general system of cultivating tenancy under the State? The answer to this question is fundamental. Speaking at Birmingham on January 5, 1885, on the work of the new Parliament, he said: "Private ownership [in land] has taken the place of these communal rights, and this system has become so interwoven with our habits and usages—it has been so sanctioned by law and protected by custom—that it might be very difficult or impossible to reverse it." The impression left by that statement is that for historical reasons peasant proprietorship alone is practical. Nine

days later, in the speech he made at Ipswich, he propounded the problem of ownership, but did not answer it. He admitted that the free sale of land might change the actual owners, but would not change the class to which it belonged. "The rich will always win in competition with the poor." But all he offered by way of solution was the three F's—fixity of tenure, fair rents, and free sale—a contradiction in part of the statement he had just made. Then, again, in Birmingham, on the 29th of the same month, he said of the three F's, "I believe we must go further than that." But having said so much, he lapsed into generalities regarding the shortcomings of the present system, and when he returned to practical details it was to refer to "the magic of ownership and of security of occupation." Then drawing attention to some experiments in small holdings which Lord Tollemache was trying on his Cheshire estates, he hoped the State would step in when landlords would not respond to the Tollemache example, and once more we are left without an answer to this fundamental question. Mr. Chamberlain travelled backwards and forwards, rejecting the three F's as not being efficacious enough, but returning to them by a circuitous route of apparently hos-

tile criticism. Judging by his speeches, he seemed to be unwilling, or to be finding it difficult, to make up his mind on this point, though at Hull, on August 5, he incidentally referred to local authorities *letting* land to labourers whilst at the same time they were compelling landlords to provide houses and allotments. This incidental statement became firmer at Warrington when he said: "We do not suggest that they [local authorities] should part entirely with the property in, or the control of, the land. That should be reserved for the community alone. We propose that the tenants should have entire security so long as they fulfil the conditions of their holdings." Six months before, his mind was not nearly so clear on this point. A day or two later, in Glasgow, he asked, if landlords will not do their duty, "where is the injustice in taking from them the possessions which they have abused, and in resuming for the community the great instrument of all national prosperity, and even of its existence?" And to the argument that this would entail a vast financial risk, he replied: "Why should they [labourers] fail to pay a reasonable rent to the local authority?" On this point, too, he had then reached the summit of the road upon which he was travelling. He was driven



to drop such expressions as "the magic of ownership"—even when he was using it he was showing that it was a castle in the air, a notion without a foundation—and his mind settled to the conception of the public ownership of the land and its private cultivation under just terms of rent and tenure.

Such was his political, such his economic, philosophy. Upon these foundations his habitation was built. But before passing to his programmes, we must consider the kind of motive and impulse from which sprung his mental and political activities. I have already pointed out that Mr. Chamberlain's mind was of the tribal order. He must champion his flock—his state, his city, his party, his friends. He may be the stag which brooks no rival, but he is a good defender. What are the natural weapons of his defence? Which of the varied qualities of a powerful and dominating human mind has Mr. Chamberlain employed?

During the whole of his career Mr. Chamberlain's speeches had a peculiar character. He appealed to emotions without being emotional. His sympathy was crystalline. I have heard from a friend of his that during these years nothing provoked him more than the accusation of being sentimental. His sentences

were polished and hard, and so were his ideas. His conceptions of social reform were, therefore, of the judicial order. He did not appeal for mercy, but for justice. He was engaged in a war between right and wrong. And herein lay much of his power with his followers. He was a strong man in their estimation. He led an assault, not a pilgrimage. This braces up all his speeches. When he attacked the land system, the typical example of its operation was "a foreign speculator" [referring to Mr. Winans, the American] "laying waste two hundred miles of territory in Scotland." \* In Bradford during the autumn of the same year he referred bitterly to the fact that during a time of great depression, at a sale of articles from the castle of a Scottish duke, excessively high prices were given. "Lord Salisbury," he once said, "constitutes himself the spokesman of a class—of the class to which he himself belongs—who toil not, neither do they spin; whose fortunes, as in his case, have originated in grants, made long ago, for such services as courtiers render kings." † From this to the doctrine of Ransom was but a short step. The evolution of his juridical thought was then complete. Defective

\* Birmingham, January 5, 1885.

† Birmingham, March 30, 1883.

in his historical sense as he has always been, conscious only of an abstract and absolute distinction between right and wrong, he was ever inclined to mete out the same absolute justice to undo wrongs embedded in our social life, and for which some historical justification might be urged, as he proposed to do to, say, slum owners when he argued that if they had injured the public they should be punished;\* or to landowners who had recently stolen common property in land, rights-of-way, and so on, when he commended Mr. Collings's "Restitution" Bill.†

Now what were the details of his social reform programmes? What was the practical application he made of his general conceptions? He showed his hand in many speeches and not a few magazine articles. Land reform was the Alpha and the Omega of his creed. Little could be done to improve the people until the people were kept on the land. He therefore proposed to give the peasant facilities for acquiring a holding, and to this end local authorities were to be empowered to acquire land compulsorily without having to pay an extra price for the land thus obtained. Good cot-

\* Wolverhampton, December 4, 1883.

† Ipswich, January 14, 1885.

tages were to be provided with these holdings at fair rents, and for these the local authorities were also to be responsible. The large estate had been the curse of rural England, and it had to be broken up. He trusted much to an extension of local self-government in rural districts, so faithful was he to his first public office. Indeed, he said at Ipswich that Local Government was more a means to an end; that "in some cases it is the end itself." \* He meant by that that it would so strengthen the power of the agricultural labourer that, so soon as it was realized, his salvation might be taken as granted, for it would follow as a matter of course. Thefts of commons, wayside wastes, rights-of-way were to be restored, and a happy peasantry, enjoying security of tenure, were to live in a state as near to Arcadia as sinful men in this wicked world can ever hope to reach.

Nor did he overlook the evils of private ownership of land in towns. The slum was its creation. He never forgot his experiences when, as

\* Later on, in 1893 (*Hansard*, February 8, pp. 836, 837), during the debate on the Local Government Bill of the Liberal Party, the effect of which he was trying to minimize, he said that it seemed to him that it would be as reasonable to propose *One Man, One Vote* as a cure for unemployment as "that the proposal for Parish Councils is a proposal for the relief of the agricultural labourer."



a member of the Birmingham Town Council, he had to deal with the landowners and their *alter ego*, the houseowners. Then, in one instance, it has been stated, £6,300 had to be given by the municipality for property which three years before had been bought for £3,000. Taking the transaction as a whole, it has been estimated that one-half to three-fourths of the deficiency in the financial aspect of the great Birmingham clearance scheme was caused by the compensation paid over and above the market value of the pestilent area. In the "Radical Programme" it was proposed to throw the expense of making towns habitable upon the land, to fine the owners of insanitary property, to declare such property to be a public nuisance, and to clear it without a penny of compensation. He also saw the value of taxation of urban vacant land as a means of forcing it to be put to use or upon the market. And yet in his great speeches up to 1885 he made singularly little reference to the problems of urban land.

One of his most trusty weapons of offence was taxation. He who comes to the conclusion, as Mr. Chamberlain did, that the wealth of the world is badly distributed, and that many have it who ought not to be able to touch it, soon discovers that the way to his state wherein

dwells economic justice is by taxation. Especially upon ground rents, which have "all grown out of the prosperity and industry of the community," was the burden of taxation to fall. Incomes were to be burthened in accordance with their amount and their character. He differentiated between earned and unearned incomes. He argued that indirect taxation was unjust in itself and crushed the poor. "If you would give the Chancellor of the Exchequer leave to equalize the duties payable on land and on personal property, when those pass on death and by inheritance, and if, in addition, you would consent to impose a higher tax upon incomes exceeding a certain amount, I believe Mr. Childers would be able . . . to give you a free breakfast-table to-morrow, and to enable you perhaps, in addition, to double and treble the currants and the raisins that you put in your Christmas pudding." These taxation proposals did duty on nearly every platform up to 1885, and with them almost invariably stood free education. When he delivered his ultimatum to Mr. Gladstone as to the amount of radicalism he would expect to find in the new Liberal Government, it was taxation reform, free education, and the power to local authorities to acquire land compulsorily

that formed his test programme.\* It was no mean view that he took of education. "I venture to say," he once put it, "that of all the legislation which this generation or country has seen, the most important, the most far-reaching, and the most beneficial is the Socialistic organization of State education." † "The indispensable instrument for any progress in life" ‡ could not be anything else but free in Mr. Chamberlain's political *credo*.

And yet it is very noticeable that until much later than the period with which I am dealing, education meant to him little more than the literary work of elementary schools. Mr. Chamberlain's assumption—the common Radical assumption of the time—was that somehow or other the mere ability to read and write was to strengthen man's intelligence, increase his self-respect, add to his political power, and enliven his idealism. It was also to improve his industrial position partly by increasing his productive efficiency, partly by extending his consumption, partly by making him a more effective bargainer with capital. It was a generous delusion—not all a delusion. Knowledge is power;

\* London, Victoria Hall, September 24, 1885.

† Eighty Club, April 28, 1885.

‡ Hull, August 5, 1885.

and the Radicals hardly ever dreamt that power is not an end in itself, but the means to an end which may or may not be desirable. They scarcely foresaw that through the golden gates of knowledge lay fields of gaudily-coloured thistles, somniferous poppies, attractive poisonous flowers. Nor did they suspect that to heap riches on a man is not always to increase his wealth, but is sometimes to make him incapable of appreciating real possession. Be that as it may, Mr. Chamberlain saw as the dawn of a wonderful day of social reforming effort the freeing of the schools.

A large part of his programmes, I must repeat, however, which to him had a social reform significance, was in form merely political. He desired to complete the work of 1832, 1867, and 1883 by such reforms as Payment of Members, and he did so because he believed that political power is but a means to a social end. As the Chartists sang: "We will get the land *only* when we get the charter," so Mr. Chamberlain argued when members of Parliament are paid, Manhood Suffrage established, equal electorate districts created, the Church disestablished, a nobler order of people will arise, and "new conceptions of public duty, new developments of social enterprise, new estimates of



the natural obligations of the members of the community to one another " \* will appear, and a better social relationship be effected.

### III.

Thus he stood at 1885, the problem of social betterment clearly and objectively before him. He had related it to an historical growth of class privilege, to an economic theory of rent, to a political theory of State obligation, to a judicial theory of individual right, to a Parliamentary programme. And then the crash came. His evolution was diverted. He passed under new influences ; he had to accommodate himself to new political circumstances ; he had to respond to new impacts. His late enemies became his friends. The interests he once attacked he had now to make peace with. Naturally, a transition time followed. The object of special attack and resentment by his late political friends, who were convinced he had betrayed them, his attention, suddenly swerved by the political hurricane of Home Rule, turned from social questions to constitutional ones. His old propaganda ceased with a snap, and a new one had to be begun.

\* Introduction to the *Radical Programme*.

But when a man suddenly finds himself making fresh beginnings, his new efforts always betray the character of his old ones. From the very beginning of the controversy Mr. Chamberlain saw in Irish agrarian conditions the source of Irish political troubles. His pet remedy for Irish grievances was fair rents, with an abolition of dual ownership, joined with a vast scheme of public work on harbours, fisheries, roads, etc., financed by money found by the Exchequer. In the speech he delivered in the House of Commons on April 9, 1886, during the First Reading debate on the Home Rule Bill, he repeated his old proposals—a stay of evictions, a temporary guarantee to landlords for their rents so as to allow the State itself to deal with the agrarian situation. When he complained to his Liberal Thousand at Birmingham of Mr. Gladstone's conduct, it was because social reform was being postponed by the split, and his complaint was supplemented by a prayer that unity would follow without bitter memories having been created, and that his programme of social reform would be prosecuted. But the days went, and the gulf widened, for reasons which it is not my task to discuss. To his constituents at Birmingham on January 29, 1887, he declared that "the reform of our land laws, the spread

of education, the just distribution of taxation, are as necessary now as they were twelve months ago, and they must not, they shall not, be indefinitely postponed." But the power that comes to man when he feels that he is fighting for something the reason for which he finds in the elementary requirements of justice, the principles of which he grasps, and considers to be of overwhelming and imminent importance, seemed slowly to have departed from Mr. Chamberlain. He rejected his old political associates as the instruments by which the change was to come,\* and spoke of a national party as the probable instrument; and this change was marked by a modification in the programme itself. He returned to peasant ownership as a fulfilment of his ideas of land reform; he spoke of giving more facilities for the poor to be educated, but did not use the expression "*free education*;" he indicated in the vaguest terms how he proposed to levy his readjusted taxation. The speech which he delivered to the Glasgow Liberal Club on February 13, 1889, is a most remarkable indication of the change. Reminiscences of the old energetic policy of social reform, indications of the new and more feeble demands, follow each other across the pages

\* Liberal Union Club, Willis's Rooms, June 14, 1887.

upon which the speech is printed, as the alternations of sunshine and shadow cross a summer landscape, and a month or two afterwards \* he was expressing satisfaction that the Coalition Government had already dealt with land, education, Local Government, and taxation. "I think a great deal has been accomplished," he said at Glasgow. He was far more easily satisfied with the Coalition than with the Liberal Government of which he was a member. In those years of bitter political strife, when the sword of Home Rule clove society right to the marrow, Mr. Chamberlain allowed nothing to interfere with his new alliance. His mind was concentrated on one idea; he became the most bitter opponent of his old friends, and no other consideration stood in the way of his conflict with them. From enemies he accepted with thanks less than what he took from friends with grumblings.

The first Coalition Government came to an end in 1892. The most conspicuous remnants of what may be called the early Radical conception of social reform which adhered to Mr. Chamberlain right through his more Socialistic days—by that I mean the assumption that social reform was inherent in political reform,

\* At the Liberal Union Club, July 31.



and was, for all practical purposes, synonymous with it—his belief that local self-government was to increase substantially the well-being of the people, had effect through the Local Government Act of 1888, which established County Councils; a miscarriage of the Government proposals regarding licensing legislation led to the establishment of free education in 1891; only a few days before they left office the Royal Assent was given to a Small Holdings Act which enabled County Councils to borrow money on the security of the rates for the purchase of land to establish peasant proprietors.\* Here were the first-fruits of Mr. Chamberlain's strenuous campaigns, grown upon strange soil and grafted upon strange stocks. The Coalition depended upon him, and was willing to meet his wishes up to a point.

But in the meantime Mr. Chamberlain had been devising a new programme of social reform, less thorough in its scope, less radical in its penetration into social and economic relationships, but wonderfully "advanced" all the same, in view of the political associates from

\* Miss Jebb, in her *Working of the Small Holdings Act*, shows of how little use this Act has been—mainly, be it noted, owing to the departure it made from the speeches delivered by Mr. Chamberlain up to 1885.

whom he looked for support. Henceforth, not only the word "ransom," but the principles of which it was but a corollary, disappeared; "natural right" disappeared; theories about land ownership disappeared. The full significance of the change can be appreciated only by stating that, prior to the end of 1885, Mr. Chamberlain's programmes sprung from fundamental conceptions of great social tendencies, but after that date they were items of promises made—quite honestly—to retain political power by recognizing certain detailed public needs. Previously he offered a reconstructed society, the economic relationships of which were re-adjusted so as to stop the mal-distribution of wealth; now his programmes were to be rather like a string of beads, desirable to look upon, but not made in the workshops of nature herself.

He detailed this new programme in the *Nineteenth Century*.\* It consisted of shorter hours for miners and for those engaged in dangerous work (he was, unfortunately, not able to attend Parliament when his friends were opposing the Miners' Eight Hours Bill in 1908); the early closing of shops; arbitration in trade disputes; limitation of pauper alien immigration; ex-

\* November 1892.

tended powers to local authorities for housing purposes, including powers to facilitate the acquisition of houses by workpeople. This last, in operation, proved to be a dismal failure, as, indeed, it was foredoomed to be. But the two chief items were Old Age Pensions, and a general scheme of compensation for injured workpeople. For the former, he had been balloting during the spring of 1892, but had been unlucky.\* He had, however, brought together to consider the subject a committee, upon which Liberals as well as Unionists sat, and this committee, on March 16, had given to the press a draft proposal of a scheme. It was based on insurance payments, the scale being different for men and women. From that time onwards his name was associated with this proposal. He had also had his attention directed to the amount of litigation that had arisen in connection with the Employers' Liability Act, and to the narrowness of the field within which the Act was operating, and he began to promulgate the idea of universal compensation by insurance.

As the election which took place in the autumn of 1892 drew near, he laid more and more stress upon this social programme. In June he declared that "the most urgent questions of our

\* Birmingham, April 30, 1892.

era are what are called social questions," \* and that note, even though it was a minor one, rung through his campaign speeches, and awoke once more sympathetic chords in the hearts of the wage-earners. The election put the Coalition into opposition, and acting again as a free lance, Mr. Chamberlain struck with more firmness the old key.

The impression he sought to convey was that Ireland blocked the way to social reform, and this notion undoubtedly filtered into the popular mind, and thus the next contest, in 1895, was fought mainly upon the social reform programme thrust upon the Unionist Coalition by Mr. Chamberlain. I remember quite clearly how general the legend on every hoarding was: "Vote for the Unionist candidate and Social Reform." That, and not anti-Liberalism or anti-Home Rule, was the cry. Without Mr. Chamberlain, no such legend would ever have been printed; without him, no such legend would ever have been believed—ever have been voted for. A careful reading of his speeches between 1892 and 1895 leaves the impression, however, that he was using his social reform programme to embarrass the Government just as much as to prod on his Unionist colleagues.

\* Smethwick, June 10, 1892.



I remember, for instance, the expectation with which his declaration regarding the Employers' Liability Bill of 1893 was waited. He had put down an amendment to the Second Reading of the Bill to the effect that no amendment to the law would be satisfactory which did not provide compensation to workmen for all injuries incurred in the ordinary operation of their employment unless by their own fault. This was his opening move, and step by step he fought the Government Bill. He was groping at the time after some scheme of insurance, though he denied that his proposals amounted to that.\* He wanted to place responsibility on the shoulders of negligent employers, to make legal and financial responsibility depend on what he called "moral" responsibility; at the same time he wished all accidents to be compensated for, and to secure this he saw that he would have to get the whole of the trade to become responsible for its accident risks. This could only be done by a general system of accident insurance, not undertaken by the workmen, but by the employers. All

\* *Hansard*, February 20, 1893, pp. 1,962, *et passim*, when he makes an ingenuous reply to Mr. Asquith, whose speech should also be read to see how Mr. Chamberlain evaded the issue. Compare also such speeches as that at Smethwick on June 10, 1892.

this, he also believed, should, and could, be accompanied by a diminution in the volume of litigation. This, then, was the programme he substituted for that of Ransom—Old Age Pensions on a basis of personal insurance, accident compensation on a basis of trade insurance. It was an interesting reminiscence of the state of mind and the intention he showed when, as a Radical Minister at the Board of Trade, he championed the cause of the sailors through his ill-fated Merchant Shipping Bill.

From this point my tale rapidly comes to its end. It now becomes details, confused issues, experimental legislation. The scheme of Old Age Pensions, launched from the House of Commons Committee Room in 1892, did not bear close examination. But it was a seed from which a mustard tree of a movement grew. Commission and Committee investigated, inquired, reported, and at length the Liberal Government in 1908, when Mr. Chamberlain lay an exile from Westminster in his own house, produced its scheme and carried its measure. Put what interpretation we may upon the use which Mr. Chamberlain made of his proposals, take what view we may of old age State endowment, the name of the member for West Birmingham can never be dissociated from these

pensions, and the part he played in making them practical politics can never be gainsaid. So it is with Compensation. The Act of 1897 was his doing; the fact that he was at the Colonial Office at the time and not at the Home Office is of very minor importance. It brought insurance into full play; it brought a deluge of litigation upon the workman; it made the Act of 1906 inevitable, and that Act made insurance all but imperative without prescribing it by statute. In this respect, again, Mr. Chamberlain's proposal has been carried out. The trade insures, the insurance companies (perhaps even more than the factory department of the Home Office in some instances) insist upon a diminution of accident risks; the injured wage-earner is protected; and if the paradisaical dream of a State when all this can be done without litigation has not been realized, the Act of 1906, by simplifying the law, has made decisions more certain one way or the other; and it will perhaps happen that one day litigation will be rare, and Mr. Chamberlain's full dream come true.

Between 1895 and 1906 there was little opportunity for social reform figuring either on platforms or on statute books, and the wealth of the events of that period must, so far as this

volume is concerned, be gathered by other hands. On New Year's Day, 1896, Dr. Jameson rode into Boer territory; Fashoda kept the country restless; Jubilee celebrations added to its unsettlement; its nerves showed some signs of wear and tear; war broke out in 1899; reaction against the Government followed in due course. Once more Mr. Chamberlain's busy mind tried to devise ways and means of diverting the public, of escaping political ruin. But in this final stage also social reform plays a minor part.

When the propaganda for Tariff Reform was first launched, it was an addendum to Mr. Chamberlain's Imperialist policy, but it rapidly developed into an agitation for Protection on the one hand, and for a tariff to be used for bargaining purposes on the other. Mr. Chamberlain had changed his mind, his outlook on social problems, his economics, his policy. He had left altogether, and far behind him, "fundamental" solutions like those he popularized between 1883 and 1885, and he engaged himself with more superficial and secondary social causes. Fair trade, he said at Birmingham in 1885,\* was a red herring drawn across the path of labour by the owners of property. It was

\* January 5.



but another name for Protection, "in connection with which they [the owners of property who had privileges to maintain] would tax the food of the people in order to raise the rent of the landlord." Protection, he went on to say on that occasion, might increase the incomes of the owners of great estates, and swell the profits of capitalists engaged in the protected industries, "but it would lessen the total production of the country; it would diminish the rate of wages, it would raise the prices of every necessary of life." Two years before, and in the same place, he had said that it was a proposal by which Landless Peter would be robbed to pay Landed Paul. It is a poor mind which cannot change. In 1903, Mr. Chamberlain was warning the wage-earners that insecurity of capital, the handicaps which British industry has to bear, the loss of foreign markets and the menace on home markets, were mainly owing to our policy of free imports, and could be overcome only by tariff manipulations. Thus, upon tariffs depended the future prosperity of the workers.

Contradictory as these sentiments are to those expressed by Mr. Chamberlain earlier in his life, they are, however, a development of certain aspects of his personality. Empire

always had for him an economic justification, as, indeed, it has for most people. It is a market. Trade follows the flag, he believed ; if it does not, it ought, and the will of the State should be used to see that it does. Tariff can be made to promote the economic purposes of Empire. It can set the channels through which Imperial and international exchange runs.

But when one gets on to that line of thought one very quickly discovers that the implications involved in it are many, and the policy cannot be confined to Imperial trade, but must be made to apply to foreign trade as well. The workman is therefore asked to regard imports as so much work taken out of his hands, so much bread taken out of his mouth. The contest for the votes of the working-man, therefore, becomes a struggle between those who are trying to induce him to think as a consumer—the Free Traders—and those trying to induce him to think as a producer—the Protectionists. To accomplish the latter, Mr. Chamberlain made a supreme effort. “Every sensible workman knows,” he said,\* “that more good would be done to him if you could assure him to the end of his working days constant employment at fair wages, than anything else in the world.”

\* Newcastle (overflow meeting), October 20, 1903.

Then he proceeded to remind them what he had done for them by promoting legislation in the past, and continued : “ Employers’ Liability, Workmen’s Compensation, and the Factory Acts and Mines Regulation Act pale their ineffectual fires before the advantage which workmen in this country would derive if their employment were more certain, more continuous, more widely extended, and better remunerated.” And he added : “ *My* belief is that, if you will agree to this change of taxation, you will not only help them [the Colonies], but they will give you something in return in the shape of more employment.”

I content myself with stating his intention. His remedy was accepted by no single Trade Union or Labour leader of any weight or consequence. He attempted to found a *prima facie* argument that Trade Unionists ought to be Protectionists on the superficial resemblance between the methods of the two movements. But even when the Trade Unionist could not argue the difference, he felt the difference and remained unconvinced.

His first appeal failed. It was in vain that he strove to prove that lightening the burden of taxation borne by tobacco and tea would be practically an equivalent to the in-

crease in the price of bread and breakfast-table commodities which a tariff necessary to allow Imperial preference might entail; in vain he argued that wages would rise if the cost of living rose; in vain he urged that his proposal would steady employment, and would keep capital at home to be spent by British labour. He knew that the balance on the side of the wage-earner was uncertain, and he boldly asked for some sacrifice for the sake of Imperial unity. His proposals were rejected. The working-classes at the time were, indeed, thinking far more on the lines of his 1885 speeches, and of the politics and economics of monopoly, than upon the lines along which he was striving to lead them in 1905.

Since the first appeal was made, depression has come upon us. The unemployed wage-earner wonders whether, if he retaliated as Mr. Chamberlain asked him, and if he infused the militarist spirit into his commerce, more foreign markets would be open to him; whether, if he tried to protect his home market, he could do so without making his food and raw material dear, and so restricting the opportunities he now has for supplying the demand of consumers; whether, in a sentence, Protection would increase his income, steady his employment, and leave him, after he has met all his



obligations, with more money in his pocket than Free Trade leaves there. Further I cannot go. The question is still clouded with the dust of political strife. Mr. Chamberlain lived to hear his dejected followers cheer, and to feel that the weary workman, beaten and buffeted in the war of competitive industry, was looking towards Protection with an inquiring eye, and was listening with some sympathy to the promises of its apostles. And then, just when the routed battalions were apparently being rallied, the disheartened forces reorganized, the busy brain that had fought so long, so nimbly, with so much resource, became numb, and Mr. Chamberlain faded from the men who are, to live amongst those who have been.

## MR. CHAMBERLAIN AND IMPERIAL POLICY.

By the Rt. Hon. VISCOUNT MILNER, G.C.B.,  
G.C.M.G.

NO student of Mr. Chamberlain's public life can fail to be struck by its many-sidedness, or by the steady growth in the range of his interests and activities. From a successful man of business and municipal administrator he grew into a Parliamentarian and party leader, from a protagonist in the political struggles of the United Kingdom into a statesman of Imperial rank. It is in the latter capacity, by virtue of his efforts to consolidate the British Empire and of his power of making men realize its nature and potentialities, that he is most certain to live in history. Yet he was nearly sixty years old before he began to play any considerable part in Imperial as distinct from purely British politics. His activity in the field, in which he was destined to exercise so decisive an influence and to leave so imperish-

able a mark, was almost wholly confined to the last ten or eleven years of his public life. In the summer of 1895 he entered Lord Salisbury's third Ministry as Secretary of State for the Colonies. In the summer of 1906 he was struck down by the malady which terminated his active public career. Yet that comparatively brief period was an epoch-making one. It constitutes a turning-point in the history of the British race. Whatever the future may bring forth, we can never go back to the old conception of "the Colonial Empire." The very word "Colony" is felt to be a misnomer as applied to Canada, to Australia, to South Africa, or to New Zealand. The British Empire of the future will be a union of a number of great British states of equal status, or it will cease to be. Mr. Chamberlain was the first statesman who clearly foresaw the lines on which the Empire, if it was to continue to exist, was bound to develop. He was the first to realize, and to make his countrymen realize, that the growth of the self-governing "Colonies" into great independent states did not necessarily involve a loosening of the bonds of Empire, but that, on the contrary, it might result in the evolution of a new body politic, more powerful and more permanent than the old.

When Mr. Chamberlain joined the Government of 1895, he was in a position to choose among Cabinet Offices the one most congenial to himself. Under these circumstances his choice of the Colonial Office was received with very general surprise. Though high in official rank, the Secretaryship of State for the Colonies had always been regarded as a dignified but somewhat humdrum post, requiring indeed an occupant of personal and political weight, but offering little attraction to the more active and ambitious spirits of either party. Of the Unionist leaders Mr. Chamberlain was at that time, with the doubtful exception of Lord Salisbury himself, the most influential man in the country. It would have been in accordance with traditional notions that he should become Chancellor of the Exchequer, or Home Secretary, or Secretary of State for War. His choice of the Colonial Office was a new departure. It was in itself a political event of the first importance, for it showed that the most vigorous and go-ahead of statesmen saw in the Colonial Secretaryship a promising field for his energy and his creativeness. But if the public were at first puzzled by the importance which Mr. Chamberlain assigned to that position, he had not been twelve months in office before every one



recognized the soundness of his judgment in this respect. The post which he had chosen was, in fact, the one which offered the greatest scope for constructive statesmanship. It was characteristic of the man, of his power of intuition, his adaptability to new ideas, his capacity of growth, that he was the first to recognize this fact, and, by recognizing it, to inaugurate a new era in the history of the Empire.

Mr. Chamberlain's activity as Colonial Secretary falls under two distinct but closely related heads. It is often forgotten that, under our present administrative arrangements, the statesman at the head of the Colonial Office has to deal with two very different problems. On the one hand, he is in charge of the relations of the United Kingdom with the other self-governing portions of the Empire, a duty demanding for its efficient discharge the largest measure of sympathy, insight, foresight, and tact. On the other hand, he is directly responsible for the administration of the vast tropical and sub-tropical territories, which, as Crown Colonies, protectorates, or "spheres of influence," are governed autocratically from Downing Street. Mr. Chamberlain's occupancy of the Colonial Office was epoch-making in both these directions.

More than any other man, he helped by his actions and his teaching to transfer the idea of the organic Union of the self-governing states of the Empire from the region of nebulous aspiration to the sphere of practical politics. His record in that respect is familiar to all men, and has made his name a household word in every community of European race which owns allegiance to the British Crown. But his influence was no less strong, though less conspicuous, upon the administration of the dependent Empire. He was the first to direct the attention of his countrymen to the potentialities of their great "undeveloped estate," and to give a much-needed impulse to the work of developing it.

In the history of Mr. Chamberlain's efforts in the cause of Imperial Union, the great landmarks are the Colonial Conferences of 1897 and 1902, and his conversion to Tariff Reform in 1903, followed as it was by that vigorous campaign in support of his newly-adopted policy which filled the remaining years of his public life. The speeches with which he opened the two Conferences, and his speech at Glasgow in October 1903—inaugurating the Tariff Reform campaign—contain between them the chief articles of his Imperialist creed. But the new

ideas, to which as Colonial Minister he gave such authoritative expression, were not, as some of his critics have contended, merely taken up by him in order to enhance the importance of his own office. He did not become an Imperialist because he happened to find himself at the Colonial Office. He chose the Colonial Office because his mind had for at least ten years before been turning steadily towards Imperialism. His experience as a member of the Cabinet of 1880-5, with its difficulties in Egypt and in the Transvaal, and its constant friction with other Powers—with France, with Germany, with Portugal—in the “scramble for Africa,” his mission to Washington in 1887, his visit to Egypt in the winter of 1890-1—had all helped to impress upon him the growing magnitude and complexity of our Imperial responsibilities. On the other hand, he had realized the rapid development and vast potentialities of the self-governing British States. And so there had sprung up in his mind the conception of the Empire as an edifice resting securely on several great pillars in different portions of the globe, not supported, as hitherto, by the United Kingdom alone. This idea found expression as far back as 1887 in an address which he delivered at the Annual Dinner of the Toronto Board of

Trade. "One of our poets, Matthew Arnold," he then said, "has written of the burden of this vast Empire. He has spoken of Great Britain as a Titan staggering under the burden of the obligations of Empire. Yes! obligations! But we will not lessen them by a cowardly surrender or by a mean betrayal of the interests that are entrusted to our care. *Relief must be found in drawing together the great component parts of the Empire*, not in casting away the outposts or cutting off the bulwarks." \* And speaking in London in the following year he reverted to the same idea: "There is a word which I am almost afraid to mention. I have been assured upon the highest authority that confederation is an empty dream, the fantastic vision of fools and fanatics.....I am well aware that up to the present time no practical scheme of federation has been submitted or suggested, but I do not think that such a scheme is impossible. There are two points which have to be prominently borne in mind: there is the question of commercial union, and the question of union for defence." † In these words we have, somewhat crudely expressed, Mr. Chamberlain's Imperial

\* *Foreign and Colonial Speeches by the Rt. Hon. Joseph Chamberlain, M.P.* Authorized edition, 1897, p. 13.

† *Ibid.*, pp. 26, 27.



policy in embryo ; organic union of the empire as the goal ; commerce and defence as the two converging lines of advance towards that goal—the two great common interests calling aloud for concerted action. Other utterances of his during the years 1887–97 might be quoted to show that thoughts of this character were constantly exercising his mind.

It was thus no sudden or superficial impulse, but a slowly matured conviction, which inspired the speech addressed to the assembled Prime Ministers of the Dominions at the opening of the Conference of 1897. Admirable for its breadth of view, and for the frankness and courage with which the speaker indicated his own hopes and aspirations, that great statement of policy is no less admirable for its moderation and for the practical common-sense which tempered its idealism. No attempt was made to slur over the difficulties besetting closer union or unduly to force the pace towards the desired end. It has been the practice of those who look askance at all attempts to bring about an effective organization of the Empire, to represent Mr. Chamberlain either as trying to bring pressure to bear on the Colonies to sacrifice themselves to the interests of Imperial aggrandisement, or as luring them into partnership with the

✓ Mother Country without a clear indication of what such partnership involved. Both theories are demonstrably false. His speeches simply teem with evidence disproving them. In the very address just referred to, so far from seeking to push the Colonies farther than they wished to go, he emphatically stated that the initiative must rest with them. "In this country, at all events, I may truly say, the idea of federation is in the air. Whether with you it has gone as far, it is for you to say, and it is also for you to consider whether we can give any practical application to the principle." \* And again, "As regards the larger question, and anything in the nature of a Federation of the Empire, it seems to me to depend entirely upon the feeling which exists in the Colonies themselves. Here you will be met half way. The question is whether up to the present time there is such a genuine popular demand for closer union as would justify us in considering practical proposals to give it shape." † His own personal leaning frankly avowed, but without the faintest note of dictation—"I offer it merely as

\* *Proceedings of a Conference between the Secretary of State for the Colonies and the Premiers of the Self-Governing Colonies in the Colonial Office, London, June and July 1897, p. 5.*

† *Ibid.*

a personal suggestion"—was in favour of a "Council of the Empire, to which the Colonies would send representative plenipotentiaries," but a Council confined in the first instance to purely advisory functions, though it "might slowly grow into that Federal Council to which we must always look forward as our ultimate ideal.")

So much for the charge of hastiness and pressure. But there is even less justification for accusing Mr. Chamberlain of trying to conceal from those whom he was addressing what the policy of closer union involved. It did not mean subordination. The Colonies would claim, and rightly claim, "their share in the management of the Empire which, we like to think, is as much theirs as it is ours." \* But it did mean "sharing the burden, as well as sharing the power." "Of course, with the privilege of management and of control will come the obligation and the responsibility. There will come some form of contribution towards the expense for objects which we shall have in common. That, I say, is self-evident, but it is to be borne in mind *even in these early stages of the consideration of the subject.*" †

\* *Proceedings of a Conference between the Secretary of State for the Colonies and the Premiers of the Self-Governing Colonies in the Colonial Office, London, June and July 1897, p. 5.*

† *Ibid.*, p. 6.

There could be no broader, franker, or more straightforward statement of the meaning and the consequences of closer union than that; and the speaker went on to drive it home by a searching analysis of the actual distribution of the burdens of Empire. The load resting upon the Mother Country; the benefits accruing to the Colonies from her readiness to shoulder it; the great increase of armaments, which the Colonies would have to face if they stood alone; the insignificance of their existing contributions to the common defence, when measured by their growing population and prosperity—all these were clearly set forth, but without the slightest accent of querulousness or of reproach. ✓ No word was uttered implying that the Mother Country was either unable or unwilling to continue to bear the whole responsibility. Still less was there any suggestion that the system of Imperial partnership, if it was to come about, could possibly come in any other way than by the free initiative of the Colonies themselves. ✓

The closer union of the Empire, as Mr. Chamberlain conceived it, remains merely an aspiration even to the present day. The members of the Conference of 1897, deeply impressed as they were by the personality of



the Colonial Secretary, sympathizing with his Imperial patriotism, and certainly not suspecting him of any desire to coerce or to delude them, were nevertheless unwilling to take any steps in the direction of constitutional change. (Indeed, the Conference adopted, with only two dissentients—Mr. Seddon (New Zealand), and Mr. Braddon (Tasmania)—a resolution declaring that the “present political relations between the United Kingdom and the self-governing Colonies are generally satisfactory under the existing conditions of things.” The same view would probably be expressed if the question were directly raised at any conference of Prime Ministers of the self-governing Dominions at the present time. Now, as then, they would, with rare exceptions, prefer to go on as they are, partly from a haunting fear of some infringement of their cherished “autonomy,” partly from the opportunist reluctance of successful party leaders to embark on large enterprises lying outside the familiar sphere of local party warfare. In this matter of Imperial—or, should we not rather say, of National—Union (for it is the holding together of the scattered communities of the British race which hangs in the balance) the peoples of the self-governing Empire are probably far

in advance of the "statesmen." But it needs a great impulse and great leaders to implement the deep but helpless desire of the race to remain united, over the heads of the politicians. The average Briton, whether in the United Kingdom or in the Dominions, is on the side of Union, but he does not know how to prevent drifting apart. For that he looks to the men who are, or are supposed to be, versed in statecraft. But these men, as a rule, have no particular objection to drifting. Their statecraft consists, for the most part, in a faculty of adroit manœuvring among familiar objects on a comparatively limited field. They have no particular wish to transfer their activity to a wider arena, which might not suit them, or to tilt against a *status quo*, under which they have themselves been quite comfortably successful.

But if Mr. Chamberlain failed in 1897, as he failed again in 1902, in the attempt to induce his colleagues in the Colonial Conference to face the problem of the better organization of the Empire, his efforts were nevertheless not without great effect on public opinion, both in the United Kingdom and in the Dominions. And not only his efforts at the Conferences, but every act and utterance of his eight years at the Colonial Office. His intense belief in the

Empire and the British race, his instinctive sympathy with the views and aspirations of "the younger nations," his frank recognition of their "equality of status"—all contributed to give a great impetus to the Imperial movement everywhere. It was due to him that the idea of an organic union of the Empire, which since the demise of the old Imperial Federation League had receded far into the background, was once more restored to that foremost place in active political speculation which it has ever since occupied. But his influence was not confined to the region of speculation. It bore very practical fruit, at the time of the South African War, in the promptitude with which all the self-governing Colonies sent contingents to fight by the side of the troops dispatched from the United Kingdom. It is probable, indeed, that that assistance would have been vouchsafed in any case. But there can be no doubt that it was given all the more readily and gladly in consequence of the new spirit which Mr. Chamberlain had infused into the relations of the Mother Country with her vigorous offspring, and of the faith which he had always shown in their capacity and their patriotism.]

Of the South African War, and of Mr. Chamberlain's dealings with South Africa generally,

it is impossible to give any adequate account in these pages. He was confronted with a grave crisis in that country at the very outset of his Colonial Secretaryship, and South African affairs necessarily remained his chief preoccupation almost up to its close. Fate had willed that he should be the protagonist on the British side in the long struggle, culminating in a prolonged and destructive war, which was required to decide the political future of the lands between Cape Town and the Zambesi. That struggle excited bitter passions in this country as well as abroad, and Mr. Chamberlain became the object of the most envenomed attacks on the part of all ill-wishers of the British Empire. These attacks were borne with characteristic fortitude, and can now be apprised at their proper value. Opinions may continue to differ as to the wisdom or the moral justification of this or that particular move in the game. But no candid historian is likely to deny that in its broad outlines Mr. Chamberlain's South African policy was dictated to him by the necessities of his position, and was in absolute conformity with the aims and the principles which dominated his whole career. Devoted as he was to the cause of the Empire, and ceaselessly striving for its



consolidation, how could he acquiesce in its dismemberment? ( And the issue in South Africa, stripped of all details and technicalities, was simply thus: Whether a country in its nature indivisible, and by virtue of its physical, racial, and social conditions inevitably destined to come under a single government, should be wholly within the Empire, or wholly without it. Two conflicting political systems could not permanently coexist, separated by purely artificial boundaries, on the South African veld. Either the modern progressive Empire or the old-world racial oligarchy had to go, and Mr. Chamberlain had no choice but to fight like grim death for the latter alternative. ) For the long series of our past blunders—the products of the era of *laissez-faire*—which had created an impossible situation in South Africa, he was not responsible. He was simply left to deal with their inevitable consequences, and these he faced with characteristic courage. As long as British supremacy hung in the balance, he never swerved or faltered, but the moment that the question was decided and the Union Jack finally floated over all South Africa, he turned with equal keenness to the work of conciliation and reconstruction. ) In his memorable visit to South Africa, directly after the war,

he exerted himself desperately, to the point of physical exhaustion, alike to allay the animosities and to repair the material damage which the war had caused. And if his success in the former respect was inevitably imperfect, he certainly achieved wonders in the latter. The huge task of restoring the prosperity of the conquered territories and endowing them for the first time with a sound and progressive administration, which fell upon the shoulders of Lord Milner and his coadjutors, could never have been accomplished—as it was accomplished with remarkable rapidity—had it not been for the broad-minded, indulgent, and courageous support which they received from the Colonial Secretary.

It required no little daring to ask the British Parliament, fresh from the enormous expenditure upon the war, immediately to guarantee a loan of £35,000,000 for the recuperation of the two new Colonies. But Mr. Chamberlain did not hesitate to make the proposal, and so great was his prestige at that juncture, that a demand, which, under ordinary circumstances, would have led to much debate and probably to an embittered party struggle, was granted almost without discussion. And the result completely justified his boldness. The £35,000,000

can has never cost the British taxpayer a single penny, while it enabled the newly-conquered territories not only to recover speedily from the ravages of war, but to attain a degree of material welfare far surpassing anything that they had previously experienced. And that material welfare has contributed in no small measure to the appeasement of political and racial animosity.

Mr. Chamberlain's visit to South Africa was immediately preceded by the Colonial Conference of 1902, which was held in connection with the coronation of the late king, directly after the close of the South African War. At that time the tide of Imperial sentiment was at the flood. The successful co-operation of the Colonial contingent with the regular army in South Africa had given an immense stimulus to the sense of the solidarity of the British communities throughout the world. And so Mr. Chamberlain, in once more addressing the representatives of the Colonies, returned with fresh vigour to the development of the constructive policy which he had first outlined in 1897. His attitude was, in all essentials, precisely the same as on the former occasion. He was as anxious as ever to avoid appearing to dictate, or attempting to force the pace. But he was also as outspoken as ever in stating his

own view of the true course of Imperial development. A genuine "Council of the Empire," advisory in the first instance, but to be invested ultimately "with executive functions, perhaps even legislative powers," remained his ideal. And the main purposes for which he desired such closer political union were still the two great objects of common defence and the development of commerce within the Empire.

But in 1902, just as in 1897, the members of the Conference shrank from any step in the direction of closer political union. The idea that by embarking on such a course they would jeopardize their cherished independence, an idea which was certainly very far from Mr. Chamberlain's conception and desire, still haunted them, and especially the most distinguished and influential of them—Sir Wilfrid Laurier, the Prime Minister of Canada. In this direction no progress was made. On the other hand, the Conference took up more warmly than ever the policy of fostering trade relations between the different parts of the Empire. And the method of doing this which found special favour was the establishment of what has come to be known as the system of "Imperial Preference." Canada had already led the way in



this direction by making a reduction of  $33\frac{1}{3}$  per cent. on her import duties in favour of goods of British origin. The Conference now adopted resolutions recommending the other self-governing Colonies to follow the example of Canada in this respect "as far as their circumstances might permit," and—more important still—urging upon the Home Government the desirability of according similar preferential treatment to imports from the Colonies. The main result of the Conference of 1902 was to throw into strong relief the unanimous conviction of the self-governing Dominions that "Preferential Trade" was the best means, or, at any rate, the most immediately practical means, of binding the several parts of the Empire more closely together.

The effect produced on the mind of Mr. Chamberlain was momentous, and led to the most important consequences. He never abandoned the idea and the hope of closer political union. But he had been gradually coming to the conclusion, and his experiences during the Conference of 1902 confirmed him in it, that the moment was unfavourable for any attempt to consolidate the Empire by new political bonds. Public opinion in the Dominions was not ripe for such a development—

the " Council of the Empire " was, for the time being, an unattainable ideal. On the other hand, he was impressed by the strength and the unanimity of the feeling in favour of closer trade relations. Something had to be done, and to be done promptly—such had all along been his conviction—to counteract the inevitable tendency of a number of virtually independent and widely separated communities to drift apart, however strong might be the bonds of common origin and tradition. Something had to be done, and as the line of advance which he himself originally favoured, and which was ideally the best line, seemed for the present blocked, his practical and constructive mind turned eagerly to the second best. The Dominions were unprepared for political union, but they were all eager for closer trade relations and for the system of Preference as the best means of developing them. They were all spontaneously adopting that system themselves, but they looked to the Mother Country to give them at least some slight corresponding advantage, and they were prepared, with such encouragement, greatly to increase their voluntary, and so far unreciprocated, preference to British goods. The chance, as it seemed to Mr. Chamberlain, was not to be

missed. The issues at stake were enormous. British trade had for years past been increasingly handicapped by the growing tendency of foreign states to impose heavy protective duties on imported goods. Here was a chance for us of compensating, and more than compensating, for the loss thus sustained, by obtaining a position of permanent vantage, as against all foreign competitors, in the great and growing markets of the Empire. And in doing so we should, at the same time, be strengthening the bonds between the different parts of that Empire, and making it as a whole at once more populous and more self-sufficient.

The prize was great, but there was one formidable obstacle to its attainment, and that was the traditional trade policy of the Mother Country, which insisted on treating all imports of the same kind in the same way, and refused on any account to make any distinction between goods of foreign and goods of colonial origin. And this difficulty was heightened by the fact that the bulk of colonial imports into the Mother Country consisted of articles which, under the existing British tariff, were admitted free. In order to give them a preference as against similar imports from foreign countries, it was necessary to impose duties

which did not already exist, and especially duties on grain and other food-stuffs. But duties of this kind, however light, were certain to be violently opposed—as, in fact, they subsequently were opposed—on the ground that they would tend to increase the cost of living. Undeterred by these objections, to which he was perfectly alive, but which appeared to him trivial compared to the great object which he had in view, Mr. Chamberlain made up his mind to undertake the huge task of converting his countrymen to the necessity of a radical change in their fiscal policy, and the adoption of a new tariff system specially devised to foster trade between the United Kingdom and the other parts of the Empire. This resolution, which had been forming in his mind ever since the Conference of 1902, and perhaps even longer, was first revealed in a speech to his constituents in May 1903, a few months after his return from South Africa. The effect was tremendous. The mere suggestion of any departure from the sacred principle of “Free Trade” produced an unparalleled convulsion in the political world. The Liberal Party, then in opposition, at once took up an attitude of uncompromising hostility to the new doctrines, and with the outcry about “dear food,”



which it has ever since continued to raise, began to excite popular feeling against them. The Unionist Party, then in office, was, on the other hand, divided and thrown into confusion, and it was some time before the majority rallied to Mr. Chamberlain's views. It was under these circumstances that, in order both to relieve his colleagues from embarrassment, and to set himself absolutely free to preach a policy, in which he believed the whole future of the Empire to be involved, he resigned the Colonial Secretaryship in September 1903. The following month he opened, in a great speech delivered at Glasgow (October 6th) that campaign in favour of "Tariff Reform," to which the remaining years of his active political life were devoted.

Other speeches followed—at Leeds, Newcastle, Liverpool, Birmingham, and elsewhere. Throughout 1904 and 1905 the Tariff Reform controversy raged from end to end of the country, almost to the exclusion of other topics of political controversy. (But vigorous and brilliant as Mr. Chamberlain's advocacy was, and great as was the progress made by his new fiscal gospel, the change in long-accepted principles and habits of thought which it involved was too great to be readily accepted by a slow-moving people.)

At the General Election of 1906 the Liberal Party, which had been resolute in its opposition to Tariff Reform, was returned to power with an immense majority. No doubt many other causes contributed to that result, but the blow to the policy, into which Mr. Chamberlain had thrown himself with such boundless energy and enthusiasm, was nevertheless a severe one. And within six months of that election he was suddenly attacked by an illness which, while leaving his mental powers unimpaired, completely incapacitated him for the rough and tumble of public life. He was just seventy years old, and it was soon recognized that his return to the political arena was out of the question. The voice, which had for years exercised so potent an influence on the course of the nation's history, was silent for ever. Mr. Chamberlain lived long enough to see the policy of Tariff Reform recover to a great extent from the disasters of 1906. He lived to see it better understood, constantly increasing the number of its adherents, and exercising a considerable influence upon the ideas and the attitude even of its opponents. But he did not live to see it triumph. In the long list of his services to the Empire the conversion of the Mother Country to a

system of Preferential Trade was not destined to be included.

It is pleasant to turn from the turbid story of the Tariff Reform controversy and of Mr. Chamberlain's gallant but frustrated efforts in that cause, to those sides of his Colonial administration in which he was completely successful, and which command the admiration even of his political adversaries. There can be no two opinions as to the beneficent influence which he exercised on the fortunes of "the dependent Empire." The immense sensation caused by the South African War, and subsequently by the fiscal controversy, have diverted attention from this chapter in the history of his work at the Colonial Office; but it is nevertheless one of great permanent importance. Alike in East Africa, in West Africa, and in the West Indies, the years 1896-1903 were years of progress, and mark the transition from the old system of *laissez-faire* and stagnation to the new policy of activity and development. The keynote was struck in a speech which Mr. Chamberlain made in the House of Commons on August 22, 1895, when he had only been about a month at the Colonial Office. "I consider many of our Colonies," he then said, "as being in the condition of undeveloped estates,

*and estates which never can be developed without Imperial assistance.* I shall be prepared to consider very carefully myself, and then, if I am satisfied, to submit confidently to this House, anything which may occur in which, by the investment of British money, these estates may be developed for the benefit of the greater population which lies outside." No promise was ever more conscientiously fulfilled. The succeeding years saw great strides in the development of the Crown Colonies, but especially of West Africa and the West Indies, due to the active interest, the intelligent initiative, and the liberal financial support now for the first time given to them by the Imperial Government. ✓

What enabled Mr. Chamberlain to effect so great a change in the traditional treatment of the Crown Colonies by the Home Government, and to effect it without serious opposition, was his grasp of the close connection which exists between the development of the Empire and the prosperity of our people at home. These two great preoccupations of the British statesman are often regarded as unrelated, and even antagonistic, to one another. Hence "Imperialism" is apt to be anathema to the enthusiast for popular progress. Mr. Chamberlain had the insight to see, and the power to make



others realize, that, so far from being an obstacle to domestic progress, true "Imperialism" was indispensable to it. On the day following the speech in the House of Commons quoted above, he developed this idea, and at the same time foreshadowed the whole course of his subsequent policy, in his reply to a deputation which had come to call his attention to the defective means of communication in some of the Crown Colonies. "As to the general principle," he then said, "I go certainly as far as the farthest of you go, and I am very anxious that my fellow-countrymen should understand that we hope to develop the resources of such colonies as those of which you have been speaking to the fullest extent. *It is only in such a policy of development that I see any solution of these social problems by which we are surrounded.* Plenty of employment and a contented people go together; and there is no way of securing plenty of employment for the United Kingdom except by developing old markets and creating new ones. The only dominion which can in any way compare with the British dominion is the old empire of the Romans, and it was to the credit of the Romans that they left behind them, wherever they went, even in barbarous countries, traces of their passage in admirable

✓ public works. I am sorry to say that Great Britain has in many cases neglected this duty of a mother country, very much to her own injury as well as to that of the populations under her care." He went on to say that the policy which he was advocating was, "in a certain sense, a new policy. You cannot undertake a policy of this kind without a certain amount of risk. But if the people of this country, out of their superfluous wealth, are not willing to invest some of it in the development of what I have called their great estate, then I see no future for these countries, and I think it would probably have been better if they had never come under our rule." \*

✓ The record of the numerous ways in which Mr. Chamberlain gave practical effect to the principles here enunciated would fill a large volume. Suffice it to refer here—and that by briefly, and by way of illustration—to the case of two of the more backward portions of the Empire which profited most conspicuously by his care.

✓ West Africa had for years been regarded as one of the most negligible of our possessions. At one time, in the sixties, we were on the verge of giving up our settlements in that region.

\* *The Times*, August 24, 1895, p. 8.

altogether. The causes of this neglect were twofold. The climate, especially in the coast districts, was deadly to Europeans, and no attempt had yet been made to combat the diseases peculiar to it. Moreover, we still thought of our West African Colonies merely as trading stations. The vast possibilities of development in the fertile hinterland had not yet dawned upon us, and when, at a later date, owing to the discovery of gold in Ashanti and to the enterprise of the Niger Company in the hinterland of Lagos, the value of these inland territories begun to be appreciated, we found that others had been beforehand with us. For by this time—in the last two decades of the nineteenth century—the “scramble for Africa” was in full swing. Several European nations were busy “pegging out claims for posterity” in different quarters of the Dark Continent; and in the interior of West Africa more especially, France was extending the boundaries of her dominions at such a pace that, in a few years more, British authority in that part of the world would have found itself confined to those narrow coast strips which were all that in old days we had taken even a languid interest in. When Mr. Chamberlain began to take the matter in hand, the colonies of Gambia and Sierra

Leone were already hemmed in, and a similar fate was threatening our settlements on the Gold Coast and at the mouth of the Niger. It was due entirely to his watchfulness and vigour that the systematic encroachments of France in these quarters were put a stop to. After a very serious diplomatic controversy, which, at one time, almost involved the two nations in war, a convention was signed between Great Britain and France in June 1898, which finally settled the respective boundaries of the two countries in West Africa. France remained in possession of an enormous empire, extending from Algeria in the North and Senegal on the west to the borders of Sokoto. But Great Britain was left with no inconsiderable possessions—the hinterland of the Gold Coast for some four hundred miles, and a vast territory about eight hundred miles square, extending from the mouths of the Niger to the latitude of Lake Chad.

The boundary question once disposed of, Mr. Chamberlain was free to devote himself to the settlement of the “great estate” which he had just saved for Great Britain. The Niger Company was induced, by a generous arrangement, to give up its charter, retaining only its commercial interests, and Nigeria was divided into



two Protectorates under the direct authority of the Crown. The construction of railways, both in Nigeria and on the Gold Coast, was now pushed on apace, and in many other ways it was rendered evident that a new policy had taken the place of the old step-motherly neglect.

No single feature of that new policy is more characteristic of the breadth of view and the scientific thoroughness of its author than the impetus which Mr. Chamberlain gave to the systematic study of tropical medicine. If British science and enterprise were really to develop West Africa, the first necessity was to enable Europeans to live there. No effort appeared to him too great to ensure a reduction in the rate of mortality, due to malaria and other diseases peculiar to the climate, or to counteract the enervating effects of such maladies even on those who did not actually succumb to them. From the beginning to the end of his administration this subject occupied a foremost place in his solicitude. He pressed the medical schools to provide a course of special training in tropical medicine for the future medical officers of the colonies. He stirred up the Royal Society to undertake a special investigation, conducted by experts

on the spot, into the "origin, the transmission, and the possible preventives and remedies of tropical diseases, especially of such deadly forms of sickness as the malarial and the black-water fever prevalent on the West African Coast." He was instrumental in bringing about the establishment—in 1899—of Schools of Tropical Medicine in London and in Liverpool. And when, in consequence of all these efforts, the study, especially of malaria, had made such strides that practical action, based on scientific discoveries, could be taken to combat the disease, he lost no time in instructing the Colonial authorities to adopt the measures which expert opinion was agreed in recommending. A vigorous campaign against malaria was at once set on foot in Gambia and in Sierra Leone, on the Gold Coast, in Lagos, and in Southern Nigeria, and that campaign has been continued with notable results up to the present day. The Imperial Government and the governments of the Colonies, impelled thereto by Mr. Chamberlain, spent money liberally in support of the Schools of Tropical Medicine and in carrying out the recommendations of the experts. In a circular of 28th May, 1903, in which he gave an outline of what had been attempted in the direction of improving

health in the tropical colonies, Mr. Chamberlain justified this expenditure, and urged persistence in the good work. "The governments concerned," he there wrote, "will, I think, realize that the contributions which they have given have been applied to objects second to none in importance and public usefulness. But it is clear that the work cannot stand still, and as long as those who can speak with the authority of science are confident that by human effort the rate of mortality from malaria and other tropical diseases can be greatly reduced, and the strength and efficiency of European residents in unhealthy climates can be sensibly increased, so long in my opinion ought funds to be forthcoming for carrying on what has been so well begun." Well might Sir Rupert Boyce, himself one of the greatest scientific authorities on this subject, declare, at a later date, that "the movement, which had for its immediate end the building up of the great subject of Tropical Medicine in our midst, would not perhaps yet have made a start had it not been for the practical and far-seeing minister who was in 1898 at the head of the Colonial Office." \* Of all Mr. Chamberlain's multifarious enterprises as Colonial Secretary the establishment of the Schools

\* *Mosquito or Man*, by Sir Rupert Boyce, London, 1909, p. 5.

✓ of Tropical Medicine is perhaps the one which has wrought the most rapid as well as the most beneficent results for the Empire and for humanity.

The same sanguine, sympathetic, practical, and alert spirit, which wrought so great a change for the better in the position and prospects of British West Africa, manifested itself also in Mr. Chamberlain's dealings with the difficulties of the British West Indies. The troubles of these, our oldest and once our most valued Colonial possessions, though very different in kind, were not altogether dissimilar in origin to those which had afflicted the West Coast. The West Indies, like West Africa, had been the victims of that combination of pedantry and parsimony which characterized the era of *laissez-faire*. Wrapped in economic self-complacency, faithful to the doctrines of Neo-Cobdenism, even in its most extreme aberrations from common-sense, government after government had regarded with stony indifference the disasters which the loss of its old privileged position in the British market, aggravated by the competition of foreign bounty-fed sugar, had brought upon the West Indian sugar industry. The ruin of their staple industry spelt bankruptcy to the islands. Yet no helping hand had been stretched



out to them in their misfortunes, no attempt had been made to counteract the unfair competition under which they suffered so severely. The most which had been done for them, and that very tardily, was the appointment of a Commission to inquire into the causes of their distress.

But with Mr. Chamberlain's advent to power the attitude of the Colonial Office towards the Islands was speedily and completely altered. The British Government now began to take vigorous steps to break down the sugar bounties, and finally succeeded, in the teeth of vehement opposition from the extreme Free Traders, in concluding a Convention with the chief sugar producing countries, which established a system of countervailing duties against bounty-fed sugar. But Mr. Chamberlain was not satisfied to leave our West Indian Colonies dependent on sugar alone, even if the handicap under which they laboured in the production of it could be entirely removed. Experience had shown the danger of relying upon a single industry, and so, following the recommendations of the Commission already referred to, he set about to apply other remedies to their depressed and economic condition. A grant from the Imperial Exchequer, inconsiderable in its actual amount, but sufficient

to afford substantial relief to small and very impoverished communities, was at his instance voted by Parliament in 1898. With the money thus available, the deficits of several of the smaller islands were wiped out, land was purchased in St. Vincent to be settled by peasant proprietors, and roads were made in Dominica, where Crown lands of more than ninety thousand acres had been left incapable of profitable cultivation, owing to the entire absence of means of communication with the outside world. But the new policy of relief and encouragement was not confined to direct assistance to a few of the poorest and most struggling of the West Indian communities. Mr. Chamberlain applied himself energetically to the promotion of measures of a wider scope for the benefit of all the islands. On the one hand, he sought to improve the methods of sugar production by the erection of model factories ; while on the other hand, he once more called in the aid of science to develop industries, especially fruit-growing, which might preserve the colonies from the danger of a too exclusive dependence upon sugar. The establishment of a public department of economic botany, under the direction of Kew, with botanic stations in all the islands, was a characteristic application of

his favourite method of basing industrial prosperity upon scientific foundations. But perhaps the most important of all the benefits bestowed on the West Indies by the new régime was the energy now shown in improving their means of communication, both with the Mother Country and with the North American continent. The total result of all these efforts, if not so great or striking as that achieved in West Africa, has given a permanent turn for the better to the prospects of our West Indian possessions. New life and energy has been infused into a population which was sinking into hopeless depression in consequence of accumulated misfortunes and persistent neglect, and if only the policy of the Imperial Government is not allowed to relapse into the indifference from which Mr. Chamberlain so effectively roused it, a better future is assured to these countries of great natural fertility, which once enjoyed, and are still capable of regaining, an exceptional degree of prosperity.

Enough has perhaps been said to illustrate the spirit in which Mr. Chamberlain approached his great task of enlarging the ideas of his countrymen with regard to the duties and responsibilities of their Imperial position. Whether the largest and most far-reaching of his concep-

tions, the organic unity of this Empire, will ever be realized is a secret of the future. But in any case he has given, by his teaching and his example, an immense impetus to all efforts tending in that direction, and has kindled among all the scattered communities of the British race a new enthusiasm for the idea of Imperial unity. And, on a humbler plane of endeavour, he has sown in divers wide regions of the Empire seeds of moral and material improvement which, whatever may be the political future of those countries, cannot fail to produce a rich harvest of progress. Many distant communities under the British flag will date a new era of growth or of revival from the years in which he devoted his fertile genius to the awakening of their dormant energies and the development of their neglected resources.



Mr. Methuen on Mr. Chamberlain.

Mr. A. M. S. Methuen, the eminent publisher, has issued a valuable and effective pamphlet entitled "England's Ruin: a Series of Letters addressed to Mr. Chamberlain." In the course of his argument Mr. Methuen states with remarkable lucidity and force the case for Free Trade, and in his last letter he addresses himself directly to the impeachment of Mr. Chamberlain. He says:—

By F "Unstable as water, tossed about by every new doctrine, the profligate and libertine of politics, you have ruined the two parties of the State. Soldier of fortune you have known the fierce joy of conflict under every flag. Firm to no anchor everything by turns and nothing long, irresistibly driven from pole to pole, the mouthpiece of other men's ideas and interests, you have passed through the whole gamut of experience. The champion of Home Rule and its bitterest foe, the author of Majuba and the destroyer of the Boers, the Jack Cade of Lord Salisbury and the idol of his nephew, the hero of Free Trade and the prophet of Protection, Little Englander and Imperialist—each contrary creed inspires in you an equal passion; each in varying fashion you defend with the same lucidity. To you causes are but counters words but baits, figures but illustrations. Nothing has a separate meaning. . . ."

MR. CHAMBERLAIN.  
PO  
He says:—  
By F  
ONE of the most remarkable men of the age, Mr. Chamberlain, in 1903, he threw overboard his former policy and became an advocate of his ability and of such a great change overpowering impulse? The answer to his earlier speeches can easily be traced to his position as Colonial Secretary. Protectionist because he was passionately eager to bind the Colonies and the Mother Country together, and because he had convinced himself that this could not be done as long as Great Britain adhered to the policy of Free Trade.

Before examining this latter conviction, it is worth while briefly to recite the main incidents in that phase of Mr. Chamberlain's life which was concerned with the Colonies. It was in the year 1895 that Mr. Chamberlain was appointed Secretary of State for the Colonies in Lord Salisbury's Administration. Up to that time he had given no public evidence of his interest in Colonial problems, and some surprise was felt by politicians of both parties at his accepting this office. He was not long, however, in realizing, if he had not already realized, the vast possibilities which lay before him. Other prominent men, and notably Lord Rosebery, had preached the importance of Imperial Federation. Mr. Chamberlain determined to try to bring this ideal within the range of practical politics. His first opportunity arose at the Conference of Colonial Premiers in 1897. It is reasonable to assume that before the Conference began Mr. Chamberlain had sounded the Premiers to see how far they were willing to go, and evidently he found that they were not then prepared to go very far, for in addressing the Conference he began by stating that, as far as he could judge, Colonial opinion was not yet ripe for political union with the Mother Country. Having made this admission, he went

on to declare his belief that the time would come when the Colonies would wish to substitute a true partnership for the slight relationship then existing, and he frankly warned the Colonial Premiers that the privilege of sharing in the control of the Empire must involve the responsibility of contributing to common Imperial purposes. He pressed this point very strongly, reminding the Premiers that the British Army and Navy were employed as much for Colonial as for Home defence, and that most of the wars of Great Britain had had a Colonial origin. Evidently at this time—1897—the dominating idea in Mr. Chamberlain's mind was a union of the Colonies and the Mother Country for common defence. His references in the same speech to commercial union consisted mainly of an appeal to the German example of Free Trade within the Empire, for out of the German Zollverein had sprung the German Empire.

Five years passed before the next Colonial Conference, and in those five years much had happened, including the South African War and the Federation of the Australian Colonies. But Mr. Chamberlain's position in 1902 was essentially the same as in 1897. He still placed Imperial defence in the forefront of his speech; he still indicated that the only kind of com-

mercial union to which he attached value was Free Trade within the Empire.

These points are so important, in view of his rapid mental development a year later, that it is desirable to quote at some length from his speech at the Conference of 1902. After reciting what had been done and discussed at the preceding Conference, he said :—

“ Well, gentlemen, what I put to you is, Can we make any advance to-day upon these proposals ? I may be considered, perhaps, to be a dreamer, or too enthusiastic, but I do not hesitate to say that, in my opinion, the political federation of the Empire is within the limits of possibility.”

Then followed an eloquent invitation to the Colonies—an invitation which has become almost an English classic—to join in the responsibilities and the burden of Empire :—

“ Gentlemen, we do want your aid. We do require your assistance in the administration of the vast Empire which is yours as well as ours. The weary Titan staggers under the too vast orb of its fate. We have borne the burden for many years. We think it is time that our children should assist us to support it, and whenever you make the request to us, be very sure that we shall hasten gladly to call you to our



Councils. If you are prepared at any time to take any share, any proportionate share, in the burdens of the Empire, we are prepared to meet you with any proposal for giving to you a corresponding voice in the policy of the Empire."

Proceeding to elaborate this point, Mr. Chamberlain gave figures to show how small was the expenditure made by the Colonies on military and naval defence, compared with that of the Mother Country. He then passed to "the second point—the question of commercial relations"—

"What we desire, what his Majesty's Government has publicly stated to be the object for which they would most gladly strive, is a free interchange. If you are unable to accept that as a principle, then I ask you how far can you approach to it? If a free interchange between the different parts of the Empire could be secured, it would then be a matter for separate consideration altogether what should be the attitude of the Empire as a whole or of its separate parts towards foreign nations."

In view of later developments, this last sentence is specially interesting. But it is desirable to quote the whole of the following passage in which Mr. Chamberlain more fully explained his conception of what should be the com-

mercial relationship of the different parts of the Empire :—

“ Our first object, then, as I say, is Free Trade within the Empire. We feel confident—we think that it is a matter which demands no evidence or proof—that if such a result were feasible it would enormously increase our inter-imperial trade ; that it would hasten the development of our Colonies ; that it would fill up the spare places in your lands with an active, intelligent, industrious, and, above all, a British population ; that it would make the Mother Country entirely independent of foreign food and raw material. But when I speak of Free Trade it must be understood that I do not mean by that the total abolition of Customs duties as between different parts of the Empire. I recognize fully the exigencies of all new countries, and especially of our self-governing Colonies. I see that your revenue must always probably, and certainly for a long while to come, depend chiefly upon indirect taxation. Even if public opinion were to justify you in levying direct taxation, the cost of collecting it in countries sparsely populated might be so large as to make it impossible. But in my mind, whenever Customs duties are balanced by Excise duties, or whenever they are levied on articles which are not produced at

home, the enforcement of such duties is no derogation whatever from the principles of Free Trade, as I understand it. If, then, even with this limitation, which is a very important one, which would leave it open to all Colonies to collect their revenues by Customs duties and indirect taxation even if the proposal were accepted with that limitation, I think it would be impossible to over-estimate the mutual advantage which would be derived from it, the stimulus to our common trade, and the binding force of the link which such a trade would certainly create.”

Nothing could be clearer than this statement. It shows that in 1902 Mr. Chamberlain's ideal was a Free Trade Empire, and that he would gladly have persuaded the Colonies to adopt the fiscal principles followed by the Mother Country. He recognized that for the moment that was impossible, and proceeded to examine the proposals made by the Colonies for closer commercial union. Here again it is desirable to quote his actual words :—

“ In 1897 I would remind you that the Premiers then unanimously undertook to consult with their colleagues, and to consider whether a preference might not be given on their Customs tariff for goods imported from the United

Kingdom. This was a proposal without any reciprocal obligation. It was regarded by the Premiers at the time as a proposal which might be made in consideration of the fact that the United Kingdom was the largest and the best and the most open market in the world for all the products of the Colonies. But nothing whatever has come of the resolution up to the present time. No step has been taken to give any effect to it. . . . But in Canada before the Conference of 1897 the Canadian Government had decided to give us a preference. . . . Canada, therefore, has anticipated the general proposal of the Premiers."

The above quotation would alone suffice to show that in 1902 Mr. Chamberlain regarded the Canadian concession of a preferential tariff as involving no reciprocal obligation on the part of the United Kingdom. It was a unilateral concession justified by the fact "that the United Kingdom was the largest and the best and the most open market in the world for all the products of the Colonies." Mr. Chamberlain was not content, however, with this general statement. He proceeded to examine closely the results of the Canadian tariff on British trade, and he came to the conclusion that from the point of view of the United Kingdom they had



been “disappointing,” and that Canadian imports from the United States were growing more rapidly than Canadian imports from the United Kingdom. He summed up his position in the following sentences :—

“ While we may most readily and most gratefully accept from you any preference which you may be willing voluntarily to accord to us, we cannot bargain with you for it ; we cannot pay for it unless you go much further, and enable us to enter your home market on terms of greater equality. . . . So long as a preferential tariff, even a munificent preference, is still sufficiently protective to exclude us altogether, or nearly so, from your markets, it is no satisfaction to us that you have imposed even greater disability upon the same goods if they come from foreign markets, especially if the articles in which the foreigners are interested come in under more favourable conditions.”

This statement is so emphatic that one turns to examine the subsequent proceedings of the Conference to see if they provide any explanation for the very striking difference in Mr. Chamberlain's position a year later. The most important document bearing on the subject is the memorandum presented to the Conference by the Canadian Ministers. This memorandum states that :—

“From the beginning of the proceedings the Canadian Ministers have claimed that, in consideration of the substantial preference given by Canada for some years to the products of the Mother Country, Canadian food products should be exempted in the United Kingdom from the duties recently imposed.”

After reciting Mr. Chamberlain's refusal to admit this claim, and the reasons assigned for it, the Canadian Ministers state that “he has under-estimated the practical value of the Canadian preference to British trade.” They next dwell on the difficulty of making further reductions in the Canadian tariff because “large industries had grown up which had to be considered in connection with proposed tariff changes,” but they add that “it might be possible to so readjust some duties as to give an additional advantage to the British manufacturer, and thus turn over to him a volume of trade which at present is held by the manufacturers of foreign countries.” The whole position is then summed up in the following sentence :—

“The Canadian Ministers stated that if they could be assured that the Imperial Government would accept the principle of preferential trade generally, and particularly grant to the food

products of Canada in the United Kingdom exemption from duties now levied, or hereinafter imposed, they, the Canadian Ministers, would be prepared to go further into the subject, and endeavour to give to the British manufacturer some increased advantage over his foreign competitors in the markets of Canada."

This is the Canadian offer which bulked so largely in Mr. Chamberlain's speeches in the following year. Comparing it with the passages above quoted from his speech to the Conference of 1902, there can be little doubt that he had, before speaking, considered this offer, and rejected it as inadequate. Yet in the following year he put this same offer forward as something substantial which England would reject at her peril. The change was rapid and confusing, but not dishonourable. In 1902, Mr. Chamberlain was speaking for the Cabinet as well as for himself; in 1903 he was speaking for himself alone. Those who are familiar with the workings of the English political system will realize that this fact alone accounts for much. But the really important fact is that this narrowly circumscribed Canadian offer was the one ray of hope which Mr. Chamberlain saw towards the realization of the dream of his later life—the

Federation of the Empire. He had gone to the Colonies and offered them political union ; they had refused it. He had demonstrated with facts and figures that they ought to contribute to the cost of defending the Empire ; they had remained silent. He had pictured to them a self-sustaining Empire with free interchange of commodities between all its units ; they had replied that they could not abandon the policy of protecting Colonial manufacturers against British competition. One thing only would they do, they would give British manufacturers a preference over foreign manufacturers. It was little, but it was better than nothing ; and with this little in his hand Mr. Chamberlain turned from pleading with the Colonies to plead with Great Britain. That he was compelled in so doing to abandon many of the arguments he had previously used was a necessary result of the situation. His own aim was to bring the Colonies and the Mother Country closer together. If the Colonies would not move towards the Mother Country, he must try to persuade the Mother Country to move towards them. In undertaking this task he was necessarily obliged—as indeed he frankly stated in one of his speeches—to change his point of view. When he was addressing the Colonies he had



laid stress on what they owed the Mother Country; when he turned to British audiences he emphasized the value of what the Colonies had done or offered to do. The stern moralist may condemn these conflicting deductions from one set of facts, but then it is doubtful whether a stern moralist would ever make a good negotiator.

There is no need, therefore, to repeat or to think again the many hard things that were said during the heat of the controversy. The weakness of Mr. Chamberlain's position lay in this—that in his impatience to move forward towards his great goal, he was willing to sacrifice equity in order to secure the appearance of progress. He saw clearly enough that the Colonies owed a great debt to the Mother Country for bearing the burden of their defence. He saw clearly and said plainly that their preferential tariffs were only a partial acknowledgment of this debt, and were fully paid for by the better treatment which Colonial products received in British markets as compared with their treatment in foreign markets. But he was unwilling to wait for the slow process of convincing the Colonies of the true equities of the position. He wanted to rush the thing through, and he could not permit his course to

be delayed by such impediments as his own previous arguments.

His great campaign began on May 15, 1903, with a speech to his constituents in West Birmingham. This was his first public appeal to the people of Great Britain to modify their fiscal system in order to meet the views of the Colonies. It was an eloquent appeal, inspired with the conception of a great united Empire, and laying stress on the idea of sacrifice to secure that end. The main difference as compared with his speech in the previous year at the Colonial Conference was that he now argued that the Canadian preferential tariff had given very considerable advantage to the Mother Country, and that the Canadian offer was worth paying for. He did not suggest the abandonment of Free Trade. He expressly said: "I am perfectly certain that I am not a Protectionist." All he asked for was such a revised interpretation of the doctrines of Free Trade as would make possible negotiations with the Colonies on the basis of the Canadian offer, and would also enable England to retaliate upon foreign countries if they should attempt to penalize British Colonies for giving a preference to British manufactures.

Six months elapsed before Mr. Chamberlain spoke again, and in the interval a very great change had come over his outlook. He still put the consolidation of the Empire in the forefront of his speech : “ We have to cement the union of the States beyond the seas ; we have to consolidate the British race ; ” but he quickly passed from that theme to the allegation that British trade was in peril, and that Tariff Reform was needed to save it. Instead of appealing to his audience, as at Birmingham on May 15, to sacrifice something for the Empire, he told the vast meeting which he addressed at Glasgow on October 6 that Tariff Reform meant increased business for British manufacturers and more employment for British workpeople. Within six months he had passed from Imperialism to Protectionism. Nor did he attempt to disguise the change. At Birmingham in May, as already mentioned, he had been careful to say that he was not a Protectionist ; at Glasgow in October he said : “ The vast majority of the working men in all the Colonies are Protectionists, and I am not inclined to accept the easy explanation that they are all fools. I do not understand why an intelligent man—a man who is intelligent in this country—becomes an idiot when he goes to Australia.

But I will tell you what he does do. He gets rid of a good number of old-world prejudices and superstitions."

This remarkable development in so short a space of time was, like previous developments, due to the impelling desire to find some means of attaining his great end. The appeal at Birmingham had not been fully successful. The whole of the Liberal Party and a large part of the Conservative Party refused to consent to a revival of the old policy of Colonial preferences which, after a long struggle, had been finally abandoned in 1860. In particular, the proposal to tax the necessary food of the people of the United Kingdom in order to increase the profits of Colonial farmers had aroused fierce opposition, and Mr. Chamberlain was compelled to look round and see where he could find support against his numerous opponents. He found it among those surviving elements of the Tory Party which had never intellectually accepted Free Trade. The spirit of Protection never dies. Every man is instinctively a Protectionist in the things he sells; and though a similar instinct makes him a Free Trader in the things he buys, it requires a somewhat difficult mental process to convince him that—if there is to be fair play all round—he cannot



have the advantages of Protection as a seller without losing the advantages of Free Trade as a buyer. He always starts with the assumption that a protective tariff can be instituted for his especial benefit without injuring anybody except his troublesome foreign rival. The instinctive desire for a personal advantage is thus reinforced in favour of Protection by the almost universal instinct of dislike for foreigners.

It was to these instincts that Mr. Chamberlain turned when he found that his attempt to lift the country to his own conception of Imperial patriotism had failed. At Glasgow the ideal of sacrifice passed into the background ; the spirit of Protection came to the front. Mr. Chamberlain, however, could not content himself with merely declaring that he had become a Protectionist. He had to give some reason for his change of faith, and the reason he gave was that Free Trade had ceased to be profitable to the United Kingdom. To support this proposition he compared the figures of British exports in 1902 with those for the year 1872. It was an unsatisfactory comparison, for the year 1872 was notoriously a boom year, while the year 1902 certainly could not claim that distinction. Moreover, this comparison of crude

figures left out of account the great reduction which had taken place in the range of prices, with the result that the same sum of money in the later period represented a very much larger volume of trade. Finally, by quoting these figures and basing his case upon them, Mr. Chamberlain laid himself open to the risk that in a few years' time the figures might change. This has happened. Since 1902 the progress of British exports has been phenomenal, rising from £283,000,000 in that year to £426,000,000 in 1907, though with a set-back to £377,000,000 in 1908, and to £378,000,000 in 1909. Thus all the talk in the Glasgow speech, and in some of those that followed it, about the stagnation of British trade was shown by the course of events to be unfounded.

The same fate befell Mr. Chamberlain's declaration, more than once repeated, that British exports to foreign countries were declining, and that the only salvation for the kingdom lay in the expansion of her Imperial trade. "If that trade declines, or if it does not increase in proportion to our population and to the loss of trade with foreign countries, then we sink at once into a fifth-rate nation." The following figures tell their own tale :—

## EXPORTS OF BRITISH PRODUCE.

To	1902	1909	Increase or Decrease.
Self-governing colonies	£60,365,000	62,080,000	+1,715,000
India.....	32,682,000	43,631,000	+10,949,000
All other British pos- sessions.....	16,045,000	21,548,000	+5,503,000
Total to British pos- sessions.....	£109,092,000	127,259,000	+18,167,000
Total to foreign coun- tries.....	£174,332,000	251,120,000	+76,788,000
Grand total.....	<u>£283,424,000</u>	<u>378,379,000</u>	<u>+94,955,000</u>

Thus, in spite of the preference given by the self-governing Colonies to British goods, our aggregate export to all these Colonies together still constitutes only a small fraction of our total export trade. It even happens that the increase in our exports to foreign countries is actually greater than the whole body of our exports to the self-governing Colonies. In other words, if our exports to the self-governing Colonies had entirely ceased, our total exports would still have been considerably greater in 1908 than they were in 1902, when Mr. Chamberlain foretold our imminent ruin if we did not encourage our trade with the Colonies.

It has been necessary to go into these figures

in some detail in order to show the weakness of Mr. Chamberlain's proposition that it would be commercially profitable to this country to encourage Colonial trade at the expense of foreign trade. This proposition runs through all his speeches. At Glasgow he attempted to illustrate it by making a calculation of the amount of additional employment which might be secured by means of Colonial preferences. He said that it had been calculated that the Colonies bought manufactured goods to the value of £26,000,000 a year from foreign countries which they might buy from the United Kingdom under a reasonable system of preferences. Assuming half of the value of these manufactured goods to be represented by wages, that meant that there would be £13,000,000 a year of new employment. "It means the employment of 166,000 men at thirty shillings a week. It means the subsistence, if you include their families, of 830,000 persons."

This is an excellent illustration of the common fallacy of assuming that one change can take place without entailing other changes. Certainly if the Colonies transferred to this country orders which they now give to foreign countries, and if nothing else happened, there would be an increase of employment here.



But we are not justified in assuming that nothing else would happen. If, for example, German goods are shut out of Canada by a British preferential tariff, the probability is that the German manufacturer will seek a new market in the United States, and will undercut the British manufacturer in that market. If this very probable sequence of events takes place, there will be no additional employment in Great Britain. There will only be a change of markets. British goods will go to Canada instead of to the United States ; German goods will go to the United States instead of to Canada. According to the views enunciated by Mr. Chamberlain, this in itself would be an advantage, for underlying his whole scheme is the assumption that the trade of the Empire should be confined to the Empire. He put this proposition forward with rhetorical emphasis at Glasgow :—

“ Here we have an Empire which, with decent organization and consolidation, might be absolutely self-sustaining. (Loud cheers.) Nothing of the kind has ever been known before. There is no article of your food, there is no raw material of your trade, there is no necessity of your lives, no luxury of your existence, which cannot be produced somewhere or other in the British Empire, if the British Empire holds together,

and if we who have inherited it are worthy of our opportunities.”

This ideal of a self-sufficient Empire, as the cheers of the audience showed, is one which appeals to the popular imagination ; but it is clear that Mr. Chamberlain himself had not grasped the meaning of his own ideal. If the Empire is to be completely self-sustaining and self-sufficient, then our trade with foreign countries must, *ipso facto*, cease. Yet part of the programme enunciated by him at Glasgow, and emphasized at subsequent meetings, was a proposal to retaliate upon foreign countries in order to compel them to trade more freely with us. At Greenock, for example, on October 7, he said :—

“ There may be something wrong in my constitution, but I never like being hit without striking back. . . . I wish to live quietly, comfortably, and in harmony with all my fellow-creatures, but I am not in favour of peace at any price. I am a Free Trader. I want to have free exchange with all the nations of the world ; but if they will not exchange with me, then I am not a Free Trader at any price.”

How this declaration in favour of universal Free Trade is to be reconciled with the ideal of an Empire confining its trade to itself by means

of preferential tariffs he never explained. The difficulty of harmonizing these two distinct deals is not merely one of theory ; it is one of practice also. In practice it is impossible to pursue two such divergent aims by the same means. Grave conflicts of policy, disastrous either to our Imperial relations or to our foreign relations, must arise. Suppose, for example, that we offered a substantial preference to Canada on wheat and flour, and that Canada responded with a moderate reduction of her protective duties against British manufactures. Suppose that subsequently the United States offered to give us important concessions if we abandoned the Canadian preference, and to further penalize our trade if we refused to do so. What course are we to pursue ? Are we to break with Canada, and with the ideal of a self-sustaining and self-supporting Empire, or are we to sacrifice the large opportunities of trade which the United States affords ? The policy of Imperial Preferences is, in fact, absolutely incompatible with the policy of retaliation, as the tariff maker would quickly discover directly he was faced with living issues.

How little Mr. Chamberlain had grasped the difficulties of his subject can be still better seen by examining the definite proposals for a

tariff which he made at Glasgow. It is well to quote his actual words :—

“ I propose to put a low duty on foreign corn, no duty at all on corn coming from our British Possessions. But I propose to put a low duty on foreign corn not exceeding two shillings a quarter. I propose to put no tax whatever on maize, partly because maize is a food of some of the very poorest of the population, and partly also because it is a raw material for the farmers, who feed their stock with it. I propose that the corresponding tax which will have to be put on flour should give a substantial preference to the miller. . . . I propose to put a small tax of about 5 per cent. on foreign meat and dairy produce. I propose to exclude bacon, because once more bacon is a popular food with some of the poorest of the population. And, lastly, I propose to give a substantial preference to our Colonies upon Colonial wines, and perhaps upon Colonial fruits.”

With curious inconsistency Mr. Chamberlain went on to say :—

“ I do not believe these small taxes upon food would be paid to any large extent by the consumer in this country. I believe they would be paid by the foreigner.”

In the campaign of controversy which fol-



lowed he was frequently challenged to say why, if this was his belief, he proposed to exempt maize and bacon. It is not obvious to the ordinary man why the foreigner should be so inconsiderate as to refuse to pay duties imposed by us upon maize and bacon, while cheerfully paying similar duties on barley and beef.

It is, however, useless to criticize in detail these proposals for food taxation which constituted the very foundation of Mr. Chamberlain's scheme for binding the Colonies to the Mother Country. In the form in which they were enunciated they scarcely survived the conclusion of his campaign. His most enthusiastic supporters among English landowners and farmers were the first to demand a revision of his scheme. They insisted that foreign maize must be taxed as well as other foreign grain, and — what is far more important — they further insisted that Colonial foodstuffs must be taxed as well as foreign foodstuffs, though at a lower rate. In their own interest they were perfectly right. They wanted protection for their own products, and it was just as important to them to shut out Colonial as foreign competition. Their view was endorsed by the Tariff Reform Commission, but more recently Mr. Balfour declared his intention of

reverting to the original programme. From the Colonial point of view he is certainly right. The Colonies do not want their entry into the British market to be restricted, even though the barrier in the first instance may be a low one. Their own experience teaches them that Protectionist barriers have a way of growing higher, and it would be no consolation to Colonial farmers, who had lost the only open market they now possess, to know that a still higher tariff had been devised to exclude foreigners.

The other part of the tariff sketched out at Glasgow consisted of a series of duties "not exceeding 10 per cent. on the average" on all manufactured goods. Mr. Chamberlain was careful to say that he would not tax raw material—"I repeat now in the most explicit terms that I do not propose a tax on raw materials, which are a necessity of our manufacturing trade." This statement, according to the official report of the speech, was loudly cheered; but neither at Glasgow nor anywhere else did Mr. Chamberlain define what he meant by raw materials. One of the most important of the manufacturing industries of Great Britain is the manufacture of ships. The principal material of this industry is steel, which is itself a highly-manufactured product. Is steel to be admitted

free as a raw material, or taxed as a manufactured article? No answer has been given to this simple question, and no answer can be given without at once arousing a deadly conflict between the shipbuilders and the steel-makers. The difficulty is not surmounted by the device suggested at Glasgow, and elaborated in later speeches, of putting a higher rate of duty on the more finished manufactures. The suggestion was that the duty should vary according to the amount of labour in the goods. It can, however, readily be shown that this suggestion rests upon a fallacy. The proposed duties are to be on an *ad valorem* basis. But what determines the value of manufactured articles? In the long run, if these articles are regularly produced and regularly sold, their value will, roughly, depend upon the cost of the labour in them (using the word "labour" in its largest sense to include brain labour as well as muscle labour), and upon the cost of the capital in them. British capital is certainly as much entitled to protection against foreign competition as British labour, and indeed from the point of view of the present argument, capital may fairly be looked upon as the embodiment of past labour, manual or intellectual. In this sense, then, the value of those manufactured articles which are regu-

larly produced and regularly sold depends upon the amount of labour in them. If a ton of pig-iron sells for a sovereign, and an ounce of watch springs sells for the same price, there is, roughly speaking, the same amount of labour—manual and intellectual, past and present—in each. Consequently the attempt to graduate the duties on manufactured articles according to the amount of labour in them must break down. If the duties are to be proportional to the labour, they must all be at the same *ad valorem* rate.

There is, in fact, no scientific distinction between manufactured articles and raw materials. The watch spring itself is the raw material of the watch, and the watch, or at any rate the chronometer, is one of the raw materials of the ship, for it is part of a ship's necessary equipment. In a word, what is one man's manufactured article is another man's raw material, and it is impossible to protect the former without injuring the latter.

That this fundamental difficulty, like so many minor difficulties, should have been overlooked by Mr. Chamberlain was almost inevitable. His policy was not primarily economic, and the economic considerations which it involved were rather an embarrassment than an assistance to him. The whole idea of what grew to be called



Tariff Reform arose in his mind, as the earlier portion of this chapter shows, solely from the desire to bind the Colonies closer to the Mother Country. He began with the idea that it is possible to give a preference to Colonial products without making any other departure from the principles of Free Trade. He speedily discovered that, though this might please the Colonies, it was not sufficiently attractive to the electors of the United Kingdom. He was therefore compelled step by step to abandon his old Free Trade position, and to make the crude appeals which Protectionists use in every country by promising protection to all national industries against the foreigner and employment for everybody who is willing to work. In his mind these promises were but the means to a great and a noble end, but in the minds of his hearers and supporters they were themselves the end. Within a very short time some of his most zealous supporters, as mentioned above, had so far forgotten the origin of his campaign that they proposed to erect a tariff barrier against Colonial goods. It is permissible to believe that if he had foreseen this logical outcome of his own arguments he would never have made such frank appeals to the spirit of Protectionism. It is even more probable that if he could have

waited till the present day, and seen the Colonies of their own free will, without any commercial bribe, entering into a scheme of Imperial defence, he would never have proposed that the Empire should revert to the old and discredited system of preferential tariffs.

## MR. CHAMBERLAIN AND FISCAL POLICY.—II.

BY L. S. AMERY, M.P.

THE great campaign which marked the end of Mr. Chamberlain's active political life was also in the fullest and truest sense of the word the climax of his career as a statesman. So far from being a sudden and almost fortuitous departure from principles hitherto unquestioned, an unnecessary opening of new issues still unripe for discussion, it represented the fusion, into a single great policy, on the one hand, of a deep conviction of the practical necessities of the Imperial problem brought home to Mr. Chamberlain by eight years of experience at the Colonial Office, and, on the other, of a development of ideas on economic and social questions which had been proceeding almost continuously in his mind for over twenty years. The final triumph of that policy is destined to open up an entirely new chapter

both in the growth of the British Empire and in the national life of the United Kingdom ; and more, perhaps, than any other in our history, that chapter will always be identified with the insight and the compelling force of a single man.

To understand the greatness of the effort involved in that campaign, the immense change of deep-seated intellectual prepossessions which required to be effected before it could hope to succeed, it is necessary to remember how intense and how widespread those prepossessions were, and how completely they transcended all the ordinary influences of reasoning or example. When Free Trade was formally adopted as the policy of the British Government in 1845, it had already long been accepted as a theoretically indisputable commonplace by practically the whole educated world in England, and was hardly less widespread as a doctrine among the cultured classes on the Continent. Protection truly seemed, as Disraeli remarked, "not only dead, but damned." For two generations the subject was, for the great body of educated Englishmen, a closed question, not seriously worth discussion. That the whole system of economics on which Free Trade was based was one of the shallowest



fallacies which ever masqueraded in the guise of a science ; that its theories had almost from the start to be abandoned as regards many important aspects of internal economic relations in this country, and had, as regards external trade, been disregarded with the most successful results by every other progressive nation, made no difference to the stolid self-satisfaction of the professors, publicists, and politicians who made or expounded English public opinion.

For all that, an element of dissent from the dominant theory was never at any time wholly absent. Like some heresy in ancient times, Protection survived and was handed down as a private creed in many families, even when its members recognized the futility of giving public expression to their convictions. And in a somewhat similar fashion it remained a latent, but never wholly expunged, element in the Conservative Party. The conformity of leaders like Disraeli and Lord Salisbury to Free Trade was frequently tinged with a note of cynical scepticism, and the rank and file of the party were always ready to respond to the utterance of any Protectionist sentiment. The economic crisis at the end of the 'seventies—due to industrial over-production, to the agri-

cultural opening up of the American West, and to the demonetization of silver—which finally decided all the leading European nations to drop any Free Trade leanings and definitely embark on a Protectionist policy, once more made overt the latent Protectionism of the party. For several years the demand for Fair Trade, usually coupled even then with Colonial Preference, was a real force in English politics. Unfortunately other questions—above all, the burning Irish question—obscured, and finally obliterated the issue. Irish landlords and tenants, who, normally, should have united with English Fair Traders in securing protection for the industry off which they lived, were engaged in an internecine struggle over its dwindling proceeds. In the end, Gladstone's surrender to Parnell drove a great body of Liberals into coalition with the Conservatives. The inevitable consequence of that coalition was the dropping of Fair Trade from the official policy of the Conservative Party. Individual members here and there remained avowed Protectionists; Protectionist resolutions found a place, and were carried without controversy at meetings of the National Union; but for twenty years Protectionism was dead as a political force. On the other hand, the in-

tellectual world, which had been untouched by the Fair Trade movement, was, by the end of the century, half consciously undergoing a change of attitude on the question. The growth of the historical and scientific method, now beginning to extend into the field of economics; the realization of the immense relative development of Protectionist countries; the whole new outlook, in fact, on international and Imperial questions, were all tending to create an atmosphere of indifferentism on the subject of Free Trade.

None of these elements of dissent or scepticism entered into the environment in which Mr. Chamberlain grew up. It was not till he became President of the Board of Trade in 1880, and had to defend the existing system against the criticisms of the Fair Traders, that he even realized that the principles or practice of Free Trade could be seriously questioned. His Free Trade speeches of that period were by general consent a triumphant vindication of the official case. But his mind was too impatient of self-deception to be content with apparent victory. There were arguments dealing with national strength and national well-being, as apart from trade statistics, to which he knew he had furnished no sufficient answer;

and from that moment his belief in the infallibility of Free Trade was shaken. The years that followed, with their evidence of the permanence and success of Protection in other countries, only confirmed a scepticism to which in private conversation he not infrequently gave expression. Those who were present can well recall the pained bewilderment with which John Bright once listened to his Radical colleague arguing across the dinner-table that the withdrawal of the last five shillings of the corn duty had been a mistake. For all that, Mr. Chamberlain never regarded himself as otherwise than a convinced Free Trader up to the very beginning of the Tariff Reform campaign. Free Trade, in his view, was the best practical policy for the United Kingdom. But it was a policy not incapable of modification for the sake of a substantial economic advantage or a great political end. It was a good working hypothesis, not a sacrosanct dogma.

For the reasons which gradually but irresistibly led Mr. Chamberlain to the conclusion that the British policy of Free Trade or Free Imports could no longer stand without considerable modification, it is necessary to look, first of all, to the fundamental point of view with regard to the British Empire which under-



lay and dominated all his political thought. Mr. Chamberlain was from the very outset an Imperialist. As far back as 1858 he had publicly controverted the anti-imperial views of John Bright and other Radicals of his time. While still a member of Mr. Gladstone's Government he had advocated a forward Imperial policy in South Africa. His share in the struggle for maintaining the unity of the United Kingdom only emphasized his interest in the wider problem of Imperial unity. And from first to last it was the economic aspect of the Imperial problem that was foremost in the mind of one who always remained a business man as well as a statesman. The importance of commerce as the bond which could maintain Imperial unity, and the importance of the Imperial market as the foundation of the social prosperity of the British people—these two ideas throughout supply the key to his attitude on Imperial and social questions. As early as April 1888, on his return from a visit to Canada and the United States, we find him at the Devonshire Club not only dwelling on the importance of increasing commercial intercourse with the Colonies, but seriously discussing commercial union as an integral element in the consideration of ultimate Imperial federation.

That speech, with its recognition of the difficulties in the way, coupled with its earnest appeal to "consider proposals, when they come, with fairness and impartiality . . . not to do anything to discourage the affection, or to repel the patriotic and loyal advances of our fellow-subjects and fellow-kinsmen," contains in germ the whole of his future policy. Already, in the preceding December, addressing the Toronto Board of Trade, he had frankly deprecated any form of reciprocity between Canada and the United States which might lead to financial and eventually political dependence—a piece of advice which in essence implied the desirability of maintaining the Empire as a single economic system. Of the other idea, that of the importance of the Imperial market to the welfare of the working-classes of the United Kingdom, the most characteristic expression among many belonging to this earlier period is the speech delivered in January 1894 to the West Birmingham Relief Association. In that speech he appealed to his hearers to look beyond mere palliatives for distress to the permanent and effectual remedy which lay in creating new markets and effectually developing old ones, and held up the maintenance of the Navy and the Empire, and the develop-

ment of new territories like Uganda, as matters of far greater interest and value to the working-man than any schemes for municipal workshops or an eight-hours day.

In 1895 Mr. Chamberlain took the post of Colonial Secretary, for which the whole trend of his interests and aspirations during the last few years had peculiarly fitted him. And no sooner was he in office than he found himself confronted with a movement in the Empire in favour of commercial union, which, so far from being new and vague, was even then well established and definite in its aims and methods. The sweeping away of the old system of Colonial Preference under the influence of the Cobdenite school, who avowedly wished to loosen the ties which bound the Colonies to the Mother Country, was deeply resented in the Colonies, especially in Canada, and the hope of restoring it was never altogether abandoned. With the revival of Imperial sentiment in England that hope became active again. In 1879 Sir J. Macdonald urged a treaty of mutual preference in trade upon the British Government. When the Imperial Federation League was formed in 1884, the question of commercial preference was promptly brought to the front by the Colonial members, and,

indeed, it was the impossibility of finding any agreement between them and some of the more narrow Free Trade British members that paralyzed and eventually extinguished the activities of that body. In 1887 the question was definitely and officially raised at the first Colonial Conference, both by Sir Samuel Griffith, the Premier of Queensland, who urged a preferential reduction to the rest of the Empire of such duties as might be imposed by any Government; and by Mr. Hofmeyr, who, on behalf of Cape Colony, urged the imposition of a uniform surtax of 2 per cent. on all goods imported into the Empire, the revenue thus derived to be allocated to the Navy. The British Government deprecated a resolution, but the general sentiment of the Colonial representatives in favour of some form of trade preference was evident. More than that, it was no less evident that they regarded preferential trade as a preliminary condition to any satisfactory dealing with the other problems of Imperial defence and closer political union, which were directly discussed at the Conference, or, at any rate, in the minds of those who were present.

In 1890 the Canadian Government urged the Imperial Government to denounce the com-



mercial treaties with Germany and Belgium, which explicitly precluded the colonies from granting a preference to the United Kingdom. In 1891 Cecil Rhodes was urging both Sir J. Macdonald in Canada and Sir Harry Parkes in New South Wales to unite with him in a collective effort to bring about a system of Imperial Preference. The Canadian statesman's response was the heroic effort by which in the closing months of his life he defeated the proposal for commercial reciprocity with the United States. In 1892 the Canadian Parliament unanimously passed a memorial asking for the denunciation of the German and Belgian treaties.

In 1894 the second Colonial Conference met at Ottawa, under the presidency of Sir J. Macdonald's successor, Sir Mackenzie Bowell, who outlined a policy of Preference in every sphere of economic activity as the main object of the Conference. Resolutions were passed in favour of denunciation of the obnoxious treaties, and of "the advisability of a customs arrangement between Great Britain and her Colonies, by which trade within the Empire may be placed on a more favourable footing than that which is carried on with foreign countries." In acknowledging the receipt of the resolution,

Lord Ripon, the Liberal Colonial Secretary, rejected the idea of Preference as impossible for the United Kingdom. But he admitted that a complete customs union for the Empire, with internal Free Trade, was "in principle free from objection, and if practicable would certainly prove effective in cementing the unity of the Empire and promoting its progress and stability." In 1895 Preference was established between New Zealand and Canada, and between New Zealand and South Australia.

Strong and definite as was the trend of Colonial opinion, it met with little but indifference on the part of ordinary English politicians immersed in local affairs, and incapable of treating anything as serious politics which could possibly involve any infraction of Free Trade dogmas. But that could not be the attitude of the man who, in the first public speech in which he dealt with the work of his new office announced it to be his "first duty to draw closer together the different parts of the Empire;" and who a few months later declared that "this is a creative time, this is the opportunity which, once let slip, may never recur, for bringing together all the people who are under the British flag, and for consolidating them into a great self-sustaining and self-

protecting Empire." Mr. Chamberlain was bound to treat the demand for Preference seriously. After all, it coincided with his own long since matured conviction as to the importance of commerce as the bond of Imperial unity, even if at first sight it seemed to conflict with his conception of Imperial policy as, in the main, one aiming at the extension of the area of Free Trade, in contrast with the more narrowly exclusive policy of other countries.

At the Canada Club dinner on March 25, 1896, Mr. Chamberlain delivered a striking speech, which marks the real starting-point of his campaign for the commercial union of the Empire. After dwelling on the strength of the desire for Imperial union and the difficulties in the way, he urged the necessity of seeking "the line of least resistance" by the Government. That line was clearly to be found in the common interest of Imperial trade. If the question of Imperial unity was to be approached in a practical spirit, it must be approached on its commercial side, just as the problem of German unity had been approached through the commercial zollverein. But even more conclusive than these general considerations was the opinion of the Colonies themselves, so clearly expressed at the Ottawa Conference.

Dealing next with a particular proposal, at that moment before the Canadian Parliament, for a small surtax to be imposed for the sake of Imperial Preference on all imports from foreign countries, he declared it to be unacceptable, not on account of any "pedantic admiration" which he entertained for the theory of Free Trade, but because a mere 2 or 5 per cent. preference on top of existing duties in the colonies was not a "sufficient *quid pro quo*" for a complete change in British fiscal policy. But a proposal for a true zollverein, he declared, adroitly basing himself on Lord Ripon's dispatch, would be "a proper subject for discussion, and might probably lead to a satisfactory arrangement." On June 9 he repeated substantially the same argument to the assembled representatives of the Chambers of Commerce of the Empire.

It has usually been assumed that in those speeches Mr. Chamberlain wholly rejected the principle of Imperial Preference, which he afterwards advocated, in favour of a zollverein, based on a single Imperial tariff with absolute internal Free Trade. A closer inspection of the speeches shows that this was not the case. The preference which he had in view, and rejected as inadequate, was one where the favour



to be given by the Colonies was quite incommensurate with the change in policy asked of the Mother Country. The zollverein which he advocated was clearly not a single Imperial tariff, but a system of independent tariffs, in which, however, the principle of Preference should be carried far enough to deprive the duties on Imperial trade of any Protectionist character. The essential difference between this zollverein, regarded as a basis of discussion and the system of substantial mutual preferences as advocated by Mr. Chamberlain after 1903, is not really so very great. He certainly cannot have regarded it as very profound himself, for in this same month of June 1896, in conversation with Mr. Arnold-Forster, he expressed the confident hope of carrying through a scheme of Imperial Preference, including the taxation in the United Kingdom of food-stuffs, and even of some raw materials, as the result of a conference on tariff union which he believed would shortly be suggested by the Canadian Government. In accepting Preference as the basis of a new Imperial policy, Mr. Chamberlain was at this stage influenced solely by the need for Imperial unity, and by the immense possibilities of economic development inherent in the policy. He was not in the least prepared to accept the

view, now first beginning to be asserted by Mr. E. E. Williams and other writers, that Free Trade had been a positive failure, or that there was any cause for serious alarm in the state of British trade; and he expressed his views forcibly on that subject to the Birmingham Chamber of Commerce in London.

Meanwhile the Liberal Party had come into power in Canada. Though pledged by the general record of his party and by his own speeches to something approaching a Free Trade policy, Sir Wilfrid Laurier realized the impossibility of putting such a policy into effect. But by a masterly inspiration he conceived the idea of reconciling his acceptance of the dominant sentiment in Canada with something that could at any rate be plausibly defended as a move in the direction of Free Trade, by initiating a direct reduction of duties to British trade without waiting for the establishment of a reciprocal preference in the United Kingdom. In April 1897 the preference came into force. In view of the German and Belgian treaties, it had to be general in its terms, applying to all nations whose tariff on Canadian trade was no higher than the Canadian reduced tariff. But it was confidently hoped that British public opinion would insist on the

denunciation of the treaties, and in view of this it was announced that the preference would be increased from  $12\frac{1}{2}$  per cent. to 25 per cent. of the duty on July 30, 1898.

Such was the position when the Diamond Jubilee of Queen Victoria furnished the occasion for the third Colonial Conference, which met on June 27, 1897. The whole field of Imperial relations—political, defensive, and economic—was discussed. But, except from Mr. Seddon, Mr. Chamberlain received practically no support in his suggestions for the creation of an Imperial Council or other permanent machinery of Imperial consultation; while the attitude of the Colonies was hardly more responsive to any idea of organized combination for defence. As Mr. Chamberlain had already admitted, the line of least resistance was obviously that of economic co-operation. Dealing with that, he prudently refrained from making any proposals, and, acknowledging the practical difficulty of anything approaching a zollverein in the German sense, invited discussion, and expressed his readiness to join in instituting an investigation. A resolution was passed in which the Colonies unanimously and earnestly recommended the denunciation of the obnoxious treaties, and this recom-

mendation was immediately acted upon by the Imperial Government. As regards Preference itself, the only resolution passed was one by which the premiers present undertook to consider the granting of a preference to the United Kingdom by their Colonies, the question of reciprocity being left in abeyance, no doubt in the hope that the example given would assist in the conversion of British public opinion. The proposed joint] investigation never took place, and the whole question of Imperial commercial union was to some extent thrust aside by the South African crisis.

The war, with its example of Imperial co-operation on the field, gave an immense stimulus to that Imperial sentiment which Mr. Chamberlain had worked so earnestly to promote. If only the opportunity had been seized in 1900 there would have been little difficulty in inaugurating a complete scheme of preference in the imposition of new duties required for war taxation. But Mr. Chamberlain's colleagues lacked both the knowledge and the imagination required for such a step. Nevertheless, one tax at least was imposed for war purposes which could lend itself very suitably to preferential reduction afterwards, and provide a starting-point for the gradual establishment of Prefer-



ence in the United Kingdom—namely, the shilling registration duty on all imported corn. Mr. Chamberlain made up his mind to use this duty for the establishment of Preference at the first possible opportunity. On May 16, 1902, when the Boer surrender was already a foregone conclusion, he addressed the Birmingham Liberal Unionist Association in a speech in which he made his intentions perfectly explicit. That speech is so significant, not only for its clear declaration that the new war taxes were to be used as the basis of Preference, but also for its definitely critical tone towards the existing fiscal system, that one passage at least is worth quoting :—

“ Old ideas of trade and free competition have changed. We are face to face with great combinations, with enormous trusts, having behind them gigantic wealth. Even the industries and commerce which we thought to be peculiarly our own, even these are in danger. It is quite impossible that those new methods of competition can be met by adherence to old and antiquated methods, which were perfectly right at the time at which they were developed. At the present moment the Empire is

being attacked on all sides, and in our isolation we must look to ourselves. We must draw closer our internal relations, the ties of sentiment, the ties of sympathy—yes, and the ties of interest. If by adherence to economic pedantry, to old shibboleths, we are to lose opportunities of closer union which are offered us by our Colonies, if we are to put aside occasions now within our grasp, if we do not take every chance in our power to keep British trade in British hands, I am certain that we shall deserve the disasters which will infallibly come upon us. . . .”

A few weeks later came the fourth Colonial Conference. Once again the whole field of Imperial relations was covered, and once again Mr. Chamberlain found the Colonial representatives irresponsive—if anything even more so than in 1897—to the idea of an Imperial Council or to effective combination for defence, but more positive than ever on the question of Preference. A series of resolutions was passed, in which complete inter-Imperial Free Trade was dismissed as for the present impracticable; the desirability of the grant of substantial preference by the Colonies to the United King-

dom was affirmed; and last, but not least, the United Kingdom was respectfully but definitely urged to grant preference to the Colonies "by exemption from or reduction of duties now or hereafter imposed." True to his resolve to get the greatest possible measure of internal Free Trade before coming to terms, Mr. Chamberlain at the Conference freely criticized the inadequacy of the Canadian preference, which since 1900 had been increased to 33 per cent. of the duty. His criticism was successfully rebutted by the Canadian ministers; but Sir W. Laurier definitely committed himself to a substantial further extension of Preference if the United Kingdom made a beginning by remitting the shilling duty on colonial corn. All that now remained was to make sure of the support of the British Cabinet. The matter was fully discussed and definitely settled in November, in spite of some protests from Mr. Ritchie, the Chancellor of the Exchequer, and, apparently, during an interval of somnolence or inattention on the part of the Duke of Devonshire. Mr. Chamberlain left for South Africa immediately after, confident that seven years of effort would be crowned by the initiation of Imperial Preference in the forthcoming Budget, and without any fear that such a

policy, even if it met with a formal protest on the part of the Opposition, could ever be reversed.

On March 10 Mr. Chamberlain reached Madeira on his way home, and learnt that while he had been slaving his life out in South Africa his colleagues had thrown over his policy in deference to Mr. Ritchie's opposition. A keen Fair Trader twenty years earlier, the new Chancellor of the Exchequer was at that time completely under the influence of his permanent officials, of whom the chief, Sir Francis Mowatt, a bigoted and fanatical Free Trader, was really the directing spirit in the intrigue which was destined for years to set back the cause of Imperial development, and to cripple and divide the Unionist Party. When the Budget came near, Mr. Ritchie suddenly announced that he must be allowed to take the corn duty off altogether or else leave it on unaltered, but that he would sooner resign than take it off for the benefit of the Colonies. Mr. Balfour acquiesced, sacrificing the great policy of a great statesman to the obstinate prejudices of a stop-gap mediocrity. The best excuse that can be made for what could otherwise only be described as pitiful weakness and incredible disloyalty to a colleague to whom the Unionist



Party owed everything, is that Mr. Balfour and his colleagues knew too little of Imperial affairs to understand the importance of the policy which they had accepted and now so lightly abandoned.

Looking back on the course of events, it is obvious that Mr. Chamberlain should have at once forced Mr. Balfour to choose, even on the very eve of the Budget, between Mr. Ritchie's resignation and his own. There could have been only one conclusion from that alternative. Unfortunately Mr. Chamberlain had returned utterly spent by his exertions in South Africa, and in no mood for forcing a direct issue. He made his protest, and then acquiesced; at the same time informing his colleagues that he was bound to clear himself publicly in the eyes of the Colonies, and that he would certainly renew his advocacy of the policy of Imperial Preference. With this nobody disagreed; indeed, it was generally understood that the question was not only to be discussed, but to be seriously investigated in the course of the summer. For all that, Mr. Chamberlain knew well that the golden opportunity had been thrown away. For the moment he seems almost to have given up hope. To the anxious letters he received from Lord Milner, who had just secured the

establishment of a substantial preference from the South African Customs Union, and from Colonel Denison, one of the foremost Canadian advocates of Imperial unity, his answers were despondent and almost petulant. Before these answers reached their destination he had pulled himself together, and the greatest campaign of his public life was begun.

On May 15, 1903, in a speech to his Birmingham fellow-Unionists, Mr. Chamberlain reopened the issue which his colleagues had so fatally compromised. Taking as his keynote the birth of the new nation in South Africa, following upon the great Imperial effort of the war, he asked whether things could end there; whether there could be a sinking back to the old policy of selfish isolation. He appealed to his hearers to look to the future of the Empire, yet in its infancy, and to realize that this was the creative time in which they could mould that Empire and lay broad and firm the foundations of an Imperial edifice, of which every part would contribute to the strength of the whole. He urged that at the beginning of this new chapter in Imperial history every advance made by the Colonies should be reciprocated. He recited the preferences already granted, the further offers made at the last Conference

and then pointed out that these generous and definite offers had to be rejected as contrary to the established fiscal policy of the United Kingdom. Was it to end there? Was nothing to be done even if Canada were compelled to reconsider her existing preference? Was nothing to be done by way of retaliation if a foreign power like Germany penalized a British colony for granting preference to the Mother Country? In face of a wholly new situation, the people of the United Kingdom could either adhere to an entirely artificial and wrong interpretation of Free Trade, or they could refuse to be bound by any purely technical definition, and, consistently with maintaining the object of free interchange of trade with all the world, recover their freedom of action for Imperial purposes.

“ I leave the matter in your hands. I desire that a discussion on this subject should be opened. The time has not yet come to settle it; but it seems to me that, for good or for evil, it is an issue much greater in its consequences than any of our local disputes. Make a mistake in legislation—it can be corrected. Make a mistake in your Imperial policy—it is irretrievable.

You have an opportunity ; you will never have it again."

There was nothing in the substance of this memorable speech that Mr. Chamberlain had not been saying for seven years past. Considerable passages in it were almost identical, in wording as well as in argument, with the speech delivered to the same audience a year before. Its main heads had been discussed with Mr. Chamberlain's colleagues, and neither he nor they expected that it would do more than open a discussion which might gradually grow and develop into a live political issue before the next election. Yet in a few hours England, and indeed the whole Empire, were in a ferment of indescribable excitement. In teaching his countrymen to think imperially, Mr. Chamberlain had builded better than he knew. To thousands of keen and active students of public affairs, Mr. Ritchie's Budget had come as an appalling revelation of the depth of ignorance or indifference which even an avowedly Imperialist Government could display on a vital Imperial question. Mr. Chamberlain's silence perplexed them. His speech was like the sudden awakening out of a nightmare—the summons of a new day to a new and glorious



task in the world of politics. But it was more than that. In its protest against the intolerable tyranny of a meaningless economic formula, the speech kindled into instant flame all the embers of doubt and suspicion about the infallibility of Free Trade, which had been silently smouldering for years.

Like another Tetzels in his pragmatic defence of the preposterous, Mr. Ritchie had precipitated a great intellectual crisis ; and the Birmingham speech was a challenge to free thought as direct and provocative as the theses which Luther nailed to the church door at Wittenberg. Men who on May 15 would have resented being described as anything but Free Traders, found themselves within a few days hating Free Trade with all the intensity with which any Calvinist ever hated the Church of Rome. On the other hand, many who would have accepted a preferential reduction of the corn duties with indifference, or even satisfaction, suddenly shrank back in dismay from the terrifying vista now opening out to their sight. A complete remoulding, not only of British policy, but, harder still, of their whole intellectual outlook, and of their whole mental stock-in-trade of familiar and comforting phrases and formulæ—instinct bade them avert at all hazards such a

disaster. Add to this intellectual ferment the fierce hunger of an Opposition long cheated of its hopes of office, and looking eagerly for some topic to close its own ranks and break up its opponents', the anxious shepherding of Government party managers only intent on preventing a dissolution, and the individual ambitions of rising politicians, and it becomes possible to form some conception of the confused struggle which now began—a struggle which coloured even when it did not dominate English politics for a decade, and in the course of which the original object of Mr. Chamberlain's policy seemed at times to be almost forgotten by those who professed to be his followers.

In face of this unexpected revelation of the intensity of Imperialist feeling in England, and of the universal enthusiasm throughout the Colonies, Mr. Chamberlain had really no choice but to go straight ahead and devote his whole energies to the movement. The exhaustion of seven years of incessant toil, culminating in the strenuous rush of the South African expedition, the despondency over the wasted opportunity of the Budget—all vanished in a moment, and at the age of sixty-seven the veteran statesman plunged into the new campaign with all the enthusiasm and with all the mental elas-

ticity of youth. And the campaign soon ceased to be one for Imperial Preference alone. To meet the flood of crudest theoretical dogmatism poured out against him in the speeches of political opponents, or in the pompous encyclicals of enraged professors, Mr. Chamberlain was forced to examine in an actively critical spirit the whole foundations, both in theory and in fact, of the Laputan system of economics. Countless sympathizers plied him with new arguments and striking instances, while a deluge of new literature, statistical and critical, flooded the Press. Almost before he knew it the fight for Imperial Preference had become the fight against Free Trade, just as Luther's campaign against the indulgences became the revolt against the Papacy. There was nothing in the speech of May 15 inconsistent with any rational conception of Free Trade, or concerned with any other problem than the need for sufficient economic freedom to make Preference possible. The same applies in substance to the speeches delivered during the next few weeks in the House of Commons. Even the suggestion of utilizing the revenue from the preferential duties in order to provide Old Age Pensions was almost immediately dropped in order to dissociate the movement from any extraneous considerations.

But long before Mr. Chamberlain opened his first great campaign of speeches in the autumn, Imperial Preference had become Tariff Reform, a scheme which included not only duties imposed on food-stuffs for the sake of preference to the Empire, but an all-round low tariff on foreign manufactures for the benefit of home industry.

It may well be asked whether this course was really the best—whether Imperial Preference might not have succeeded much earlier if its advocacy had been confined to Free Trade lines, dissociated from all schemes for a Protectionist tariff, and the frightened Free Trade instinct of the majority of the country allowed gradually to reconcile itself to what was after all an extension and not a diminution of the area of free commercial exchange. For Mr. Chamberlain, in the ardour of a great intellectual revolution, such a policy of limitation would have required an almost superhuman measure of self-restraint. Only one person could possibly even have attempted to enforce it, and that was the Prime Minister, Mr. Balfour. But, though Mr. Balfour's whole mind was bent on discovering some middle course which should avert a break-up of his party, his naturally critical and dilatory temperament led him, not



to a positive though definitely limited policy of Preference, but to general economic disquisitions of a sceptical and ambiguous character, and to such alternative suggestions as freedom to retaliate in cases of exceptionally unfair treatment of British trade—which could never form the basis of a working policy. Moreover, following the natural instinct of a party leader, in face of the obvious intention of the Opposition to make the fullest and most unscrupulous use of the cry of “taxing the people’s food,” and the no less obvious fear of such a cry among his own supporters, his whole tendency was to shift away from Preference towards a purely local industrial Protectionism.

The very opposite argument has, indeed, often been put forward—that Mr. Chamberlain made a mistake in beginning with Imperial Preference at all, and that he should have begun with an industrial Protectionist campaign, the success of which might have afforded a starting-point for the subsequent introduction of Preference. Such an argument implies, to begin with, an entirely different development of Mr. Chamberlain’s mind, and an entirely different historical sequence of events. But it also supposes, what is extremely doubtful, that a Protectionist campaign as such would have

met with any real response. As far as the great majority of those who gave enthusiasm and life to the Tariff Reform movement is concerned, their views could be summed up in the words used by Mr. Chamberlain in a letter to the Duke of Devonshire soon after this: "For my own part, I care only for the great question of Imperial unity. Everything else is secondary or consequential." It is the failure to realize this which has been the fatal weakness of Unionist leadership throughout.

During the summer of 1903 the new movement rapidly crystallized itself. The Imperial Tariff Committee of Birmingham and the Tariff Reform League were constituted, and funds collected for an organized campaign. In this task Mr. Chamberlain enjoyed valuable help from Mr. Powell Williams, the Duke of Sutherland, Mr. Arthur Pearson, and others. For all that, in the organization, just as in the public advocacy of the movement, the main burden fell directly on Mr. Chamberlain's shoulders, and could not be shared. The new organizations were ostensibly non-political, and did, in fact, during the opening months enlist many avowed Liberals. But the Liberal Party as an organization was unanimous in its hostility, and it soon became evident that the prospect of the move-

ment lay in the capture of the Unionist Party. The rank and file both of the Conservative and Liberal Unionist wings of the Unionist Party in the country—the one from traditional sentiment, the other from loyalty to Mr. Chamberlain—were practically unanimous from the outset in their enthusiastic endorsement of the new policy. The local leaders and the well-to-do Conservative section generally were much more divided, and in certain parts of the country—as, for instance, in Lancashire and Yorkshire—generally hostile.

In the House of Commons the Unionist members were almost evenly divided between ardent Tariff Reformers, uncertain and hesitating sympathizers, and definite opponents. In the Cabinet, the Duke of Devonshire, Mr. Ritchie, Lord Balfour of Burleigh, and Lord George Hamilton were hostile, and enjoyed the support of influential ex-ministers like Lord Goschen and Sir M. Hicks-Beach. The rest in varying degrees sympathized with Mr. Chamberlain. In spite of all Mr. Balfour's efforts, it was obviously impossible to keep all the party together, and his main object now became to avert a split on a large scale by the individual elimination of the most pronounced and uncompromising Free Traders.

Matters came to a head at a Cabinet meeting on September 14, when Mr. Ritchie and Lord Balfour were summarily dismissed. Lord George Hamilton resigned at the same time, and was followed a few weeks later by the Duke of Devonshire, who had held on at first under a false impression as to the meaning of Mr. Chamberlain's own resignation.

That resignation, accompanying the elimination of the Free Trade extremists, came as a complete surprise to the public, and seems to have been a sudden decision on the part of Mr. Chamberlain himself. It was inspired not by any disagreement with Mr. Balfour as to the ultimate object to be attained, but by Mr. Chamberlain's own desire to be absolutely unhampered in pushing forward his policy with all the power at his command, leaving the main body of the party to follow on at leisure and occupy the ground won by him. This was made perfectly clear, not only in the correspondence between Mr. Balfour and Mr. Chamberlain which accompanied the resignation, but by the fact that the vacancies in the Cabinet were filled by Tariff Reformers like Mr. Arnold-Forster, Mr. Lyttelton, and, not least, by Mr. Austen Chamberlain, who now became Chancellor of the Exchequer. Nothing could



have been more characteristic than Mr. Chamberlain's decision, and nothing more calculated to impress the British public and the Empire with the sincerity of his convictions and with his sense of the urgency of the Imperial situation. In the soundness of the decision there was only one serious flaw. That was the reliance which it involved upon Mr. Balfour's support. Mr. Chamberlain's experience during his absence in South Africa might, perhaps, have suggested to him that Mr. Balfour's sympathy, however genuine, was always intellectual rather than purposive; and that it would not be sufficient, in the absence of such direct pressure as could be applied from within the Cabinet, to overcome his natural tendency to avoid bringing to an issue any question which could be evaded or postponed.

On October 6, 1903, Mr. Chamberlain opened his independent campaign in St. Andrew's Hall, Glasgow. Prefacing his speech by announcing that he was no longer a party leader, and meant to raise no exclusively party issues, he added that he was still personally a loyal servant of the Unionist Party, and that in no conceivable circumstances would he allow himself to be put in competition with his friend and leader, Mr. Balfour. He was a pioneer, going in front of

the army ; he was asking for discussion and not claiming that so important a question should be settled offhand. He then set forth the two objects for the sake of which he had set out to "combat free imports"—in the first place, the maintenance and increase of the national strength and prosperity of the United Kingdom ; and in the second, the consolidation of the British race. Declaring that "it is not well to-day with British industry," he quoted a series of figures revealed by the special Blue-books issued by the Board of Trade during the summer. These showed that the British export trade had been practically stagnant for thirty years, in spite of an increase of 30 per cent. in the population ; that the export of manufactures to our chief Protectionist rivals had steadily declined from £116,000,000 to £73,500,000 a year, and that the loss had only been made good by an increase of £40,000,000 in the Imperial trade. Meanwhile foreign manufactured imports into the United Kingdom had gone up from £63,000,000 to £149,000,000. The whole character, in fact, of British trade was changing, and Cobden's dream of an England importing food-stuffs and raw materials, and in return supplying the world with its manufactures, had vanished. In a striking figure he

compared the cracks and crevices plainly visible in the structure of British trade, the narrowness and shallowness of its foundations, to the causes which had recently brought about the sudden fall of the great Campanile in Venice. He was not prepared to regard the downfall or decay of industrial England with complacency or resignation. "I do not believe in the setting of the British star, but then I do not believe in the folly of the British people."

But the Imperial trade would decline no less surely than the foreign trade if left to chance and the growth of Colonial Protectionism. Preference alone could arrest that growth. In this part of the speech a sentence occurred which was fastened on by critics as implying a wish to stereotype Colonial industries for all time—a meaning obviously inconsistent with the general tenor of the passage, and strongly disclaimed by Mr. Chamberlain himself. But the passage is interesting as showing that Mr. Chamberlain's mind was only moving by slow degrees from his original quasi-zollverein conception of setting limits to inter-imperial Protectionism to the Colonial conception of securing for the Empire the maximum of the foreign trade of each part, treating the degree of Protectionism or Free Trade established in

that part as a purely local concern. From Preference in its economic aspect the argument led naturally to the aspect of Imperial unity, on which Mr. Chamberlain dwelt with all his wonted eloquence and intensity of conviction.

So much for the general argument. But in response to the continual demand for something more precise, Mr. Chamberlain now sketched out a general outline of his plan. Preference did not require any tax on raw materials; it did necessitate a tax on food. But such tax need not add one farthing to the cost of living of a single family in the country. A duty of two shillings a quarter on all foreign grain, excepting maize, allowing Imperial produce in free, a similar low preferential duty of about 5 per cent. on foreign meat and dairy produce, excepting bacon, and a more substantial preference on Colonial wines and fruits, would add, on the extremest Free Trade assumptions, between fourpence and fivepence a week to the labourer's weekly budget. This addition would be more than counterbalanced by certain reductions in the tea and sugar duties, which he specified. In practice the cost would never be increased by the extent of the duty, and so, apart from all increase of employment, the working classes would get a direct substantial



benefit from the proposed transfer of food taxation. The scheme would involve a small deficit, but this would be covered several times over by the revenue derived from his proposals for dealing with foreign industrial competition. These were for an all-round tariff on foreign manufactures, averaging 10 per cent., but graded according to the amount of labour represented in the goods.

At the close, Mr. Chamberlain returned once more to the Imperial question, and to the necessity of meeting the offer made by the Colonies :—

“ It is because I sympathize with their object; it is because I appreciate the wisdom, ay, the generosity of their offer ; it is because I see that things are moving, and that an opportunity now in your hands once lost will never recur ; it is because I believe that this policy will consolidate the Empire—it is for all these things, and, believe me, for no personal ambition that I have given up that office which I was so proud to hold ; and that now, when I might, I think, fairly claim a period of rest, I have taken up new burdens, and come before you as a missionary of Empire, to urge upon you

again, as I did in old times, when I protested against the disruption of the United Kingdom, once again to warn you, to urge you, to implore you to do nothing that will tend towards the disintegration of the Empire, not to refuse to sacrifice a futile superstition, an inept prejudice, and thereby to lose the results of centuries of noble effort and patriotic endeavour.”

The campaign was continued in another seventeen speeches delivered in the course of the next four months in the principal industrial centres of the United Kingdom. In these, over and above an ever varied restatement of the main case, the objections of opponents were refuted, the position illustrated by reference to particular local industries, the interest in the proposed reforms of various sections, and above all of the working-classes, abundantly emphasized. For sheer copiousness, range, and fertility of argument and illustration, there has rarely been a more remarkable campaign of personal advocacy. The whole burden of this campaign, involving not only the preparation and delivering of the speeches themselves, but an enormous mass of new material to be studied and an enormous correspondence,

fell upon Mr. Chamberlain's shoulders. The strain of the work, and the death of his old associate and right-hand man in the work of organization, Mr. Powell Williams, brought Mr. Chamberlain to the verge of complete breakdown, and early in February he went to Egypt for a short holiday.

To what extent did Mr. Chamberlain justify his case? It may at once be conceded that some of the deductions he drew from the Board of Trade export figures have not been substantiated, owing to the remarkable development of international trade in the last decade and the concomitant increase of the British share in that trade. But it must be remembered that, under the *laissez faire* system, the United Kingdom had at that time practically no industrial statistics of any value; so that Mr. Chamberlain was almost compelled, at any rate for the purposes of illustration, to use the extremely tempting export and import figures which he found to hand. In any case, his main contention did not rest on any anticipated actual decline of our export trade, but on the relative decline of our whole production, of our power to employ our population, to maintain a high standard of prosperity, and to provide an adequate system of defence

compared with our rivals. The justice of that contention has been strengthened by every year that has passed since 1903. In total industrial production, in man-power, in fighting resources, the relative decline of the United Kingdom has gone on uninterruptedly. On the other hand, the immense increase of foreign industry, leading to an immensely enhanced consumption, and, consequently, to an almost continuous rise in food prices all over the world, of which the United Kingdom has felt the full effect, has afforded a no less striking vindication of the wisdom of a policy which would have enormously stimulated the food-producing capacities of the Empire.

A more serious criticism of Mr. Chamberlain's advocacy of Tariff Reform that may be suggested arises from the very circumstances which led up to the campaign. From the Protectionist point of view, the statement was incomplete, in so far as it failed to lay sufficient stress on the necessity of protecting agriculture, the true foundation of economic prosperity in any country. From the Preferentialist side it was similarly incomplete, in so far as it failed to work out in detail the bearing of the policy upon India and the Crown Colonies, not only in respect of its economic scope, but still more in



its political application to communities not in a position to bargain independently with the Mother Country. The reasons for this are obvious enough. Mr. Chamberlain did not set out as a believer in the principles of Preference; the need for Preference was forced on him as the only practical step towards closer union with the self-governing Colonies. Still less did Mr. Chamberlain set out as a Protectionist. Driven to combat Free Trade by the pedantry and intolerance of Free Traders, he adopted many Protectionist arguments in detail without ever adopting a whole-heartedly Protectionist point of view. In this essentially English way of dealing with the problem lay the secret not only of Mr. Chamberlain's strength, but also of a certain incidental weakness. It was, in fact, not a logical but a more or less accidental connection which coupled the immediately urgent half of the problem of Imperial Preference with the less urgent, but at the moment more obviously attractive half of domestic Protection. The two halves of the argument did not really support one another as closely and as effectively as might have been the case if a complete and universally applicable principle of Preference had been coupled with a systematic policy of domestic

Protection. The weakness was not apparent at the time, and would have rectified itself quickly enough in the application of the policy. But during the long uphill struggle, when the direct effect of Mr. Chamberlain's personality was removed, it undoubtedly contributed to the want of clear and coherent conviction on the part of Tariff Reformers.

It was not from this point of view, however, that contemporary criticism was directed. Much of it, indeed, proceeded from the mere petulant resentment with which any new idea is received by the majority of mankind. Even those who professed a general sympathy were always finding pretexts for dissatisfaction. If Mr. Chamberlain spoke of Imperial unity, heads were shaken over his disregard of the immense foreign trade interests of Great Britain. When he spoke of trade, he was reproached for wishing to buy Colonial loyalty, or for shifting his ground from the ideal of Empire to a sordid domestic Protection. More hostile critics considered that they had swept away his whole case by pompously asserting that duties always raised the price to the consumer by the full amount of the duty, regardless not only of obvious facts, but of Mr. Chamberlain's actual proposals, which were consistent with the extreme Free Trade assump-

tion on that point ; that to diminish imports tended to restrict exports, without asking if Mr. Chamberlain's proposals really would diminish the total value of imports, or what exports they would restrict ; that Protection meant corruption because American politics were supposed to be corrupt ; that the Colonies had never made any offer ; that they would never give any Preference worth having ; that they would fight among themselves if they were not all equally benefited by a scheme of Preference ; that Colonial sentiment would not be affected by treating the Colonies better than foreign countries, though the same course of action would at once provoke foreign countries to open hostility ; that the United Kingdom was the richest and most prosperous of all countries owing to Free Trade, and that Free Trade specially benefited the poor ; that a third of the population of the United Kingdom lived permanently on the verge of hunger, and that no policy, however promising, could be attempted under such circumstances if it involved the slightest risk of an increase in the price of food. And so on.

These were the arguments of weighty and intelligent critics of the type of Lord Goschen, Lord Avebury, and Mr. Asquith. But the bulk

of the criticism from Liberal platforms bore no relation either to economic theories, however absurd, or to any version, however distorted, of Mr. Chamberlain's proposals; and consisted of grotesque travesties of the life of Germans, reduced by Protection to subsisting off black bread and horse-flesh, and to allegations that this was a plot of greedy capitalists to make large profits at the expense of working-men. Never, perhaps, has a great policy been preached with equal disinterestedness, with loftier eloquence, or with greater intellectual cogency. Never certainly has such a policy met with a meaner, more unscrupulous or a more intellectually contemptible opposition. It is a grave reflection upon the inadequacy of our political machinery to Imperial needs that a great and essentially non-controversial Imperial policy should have had to suffer for the exasperated thirst for office of a local faction, and pay the penalty for the dominant and often aggressive part that Mr. Chamberlain had played in the local politics of the United Kingdom.

During 1904 the work of organization and conversion made steady progress. The Tariff Commission, which began work under the chairmanship of Sir R. Herbert in January, undertook a systematic inquiry into the con-



dition of all the leading industries of the country, in order to provide the necessary material for guidance in the framing of a tariff. The branches of the Tariff Reform League spread rapidly over the country; in many cases, however, practically coalescing with the local Unionist organization, where that organization was strongly in sympathy with the campaign. In the Midlands the Liberal Unionist and the Tariff Reform organizations were practically synonymous from the start. The central Liberal Unionist organization was, however, paralyzed by the attitude of the Duke of Devonshire, its president, and a few other eminent Free Traders. In May, Mr. Chamberlain successfully pressed for a more democratic organization, which inevitably involved the elimination of the Free Trade element. He delivered several more speeches in the summer, of which the most important perhaps was one at Welbeck on the agricultural aspect of Tariff Reform, in which he laid stress on what agriculture had suffered under Free Trade, without, however, attempting to raise extravagant hopes with regard to the direct effect of his policy to restore it.

As far as he was concerned, he was now eager to have the election as soon as possible;

to see the Unionist Party out of office, quit of its growing unpopularity, and able to concentrate on the policy which by now was the accepted policy of the great majority of the party. If, on the other hand, the election by any chance should prove successful, he was anxious that Mr. Balfour should at once summon a special Colonial Conference to get to business and settle the details of a preferential scheme. On October 4, at Edinburgh, Mr. Balfour, still mainly concerned to find formulæ which would content the Tariff Reformers in the party without driving out the more moderate Free Traders, delivered a speech in which he disclaimed Protection, but asked for a free hand to employ Retaliation, if necessary; and, as regards Preference, declared that if the Unionists were elected at the next election a free conference would be called, whose conclusions would be submitted to yet another election. This dilatory proposal was hardly to Mr. Chamberlain's liking, more particularly as it began to become clearer that the first of the whole series of elections was itself likely to be postponed, as long as the Government could hold on in the House of Commons by avoiding an open division in its ranks over the fiscal question. The Opposition naturally pressed

for debates on the question at every possible opportunity, which were avoided in various ways, even by such humiliating devices as the exodus in a body of the Government supporters. Imperial considerations, such as the completion of Lord Milner's work in South Africa, and the handling of the difficult international situation brought about by the Russo-Japanese war, may have justified this policy of staying on at all costs. From the point of view of the Unionist Party, as well as from that of Mr. Chamberlain's cause, it was purely prejudicial. Unity was not really preserved, though the field was kept open for continuous intrigue, and the activities of the party in the country were largely paralyzed.

Meanwhile Mr. Chamberlain steadily continued his campaign, fretting at the delay, but much too loyal to precipitate matters by forcing Mr. Balfour's hand. Of the many speeches delivered by him during these months the most notable were those delivered at Limehouse in December, dealing mainly with the question of employment; at Preston in January, dealing specifically with the cotton industry; and at Gainsborough in February, perhaps the fullest and most eloquent exposition of the preferential side of his policy in the

whole series. In June Mr. Balfour definitely stated that fiscal reform stood in the forefront of the constructive policy of the Unionist Party, and that the drawing closer of commercial bonds with the Colonies was the most important branch of fiscal reform. In November, however, at the annual meeting of the National Union at Newcastle, where a strong Tariff Reform resolution was passed by the conference, he once more disappointed his supporters by his indefinite and elusive attitude. Speaking at Bristol a few days later, Mr. Chamberlain clearly indicated that this constant whittling down of the policy of the great majority to suit the prejudices of a timid handful was in his view a mistake. "No army was ever successfully led to battle on the principle that the lamest man should govern its march." It was, in fact, becoming obvious that the situation could not continue, and that there could not be another session with a repetition of the humiliating performances of the last. On December 5 Mr. Balfour resigned, and the election followed in January. In spite of growing fatigue and doubtful health, Mr. Chamberlain delivered ten speeches between December 30 and January 22. In Birmingham itself the Unionist majorities were larger



than ever. Elsewhere, the Unionist Party was almost swept away.

Tariff Reform, however grossly misrepresented and however ill expounded in many cases, was not the cause of the landslide. Thorough-going Tariff Reformers had, in fact, fared comparatively well, and were inclined to attribute the magnitude of the electoral disaster mainly to Mr. Balfour's hesitations. Many of them were anxious to force Mr. Chamberlain into an open breach with Mr. Balfour at all hazards, and Mr. Chamberlain himself was coming near the end of his patience.

It was generally felt that the crisis would come at the party meeting which was summoned for February 14 at Lansdowne House. At the last moment, however, a split was averted by Mr. Balfour's "Valentine" letter to Mr. Chamberlain, in which he repeated that fiscal reform was, and must remain, the first constructive work of the Unionist Party, and declared that "though other means may be possible, the establishment of a moderate general tariff on manufactured goods, not imposed for the purpose of raising prices or giving artificial protection against legitimate competition, and the imposition of a small duty on foreign corn, are not in principle objectionable, and should

be adopted if shown to be necessary for the attainment of the ends in view or for purposes of revenue." The long internal crisis in the Unionist Party on the subject of Tariff Reform was thus, officially at any rate, at an end. But the fatal atmosphere of hesitation and indefiniteness was destined to linger on.

During the spring and summer Mr. Chamberlain made several more speeches. On July 8 was his seventieth birthday, and the occasion was utilized by his fellow-citizens in Birmingham for a tremendous demonstration, occupying two days. On each of these Mr. Chamberlain spoke, on the second reviewing the whole work of the "Birmingham school" in social and Imperial politics. On the 10th, the Chambers of Commerce of the Empire met in congress in London, and at once proceeded to pass by an almost unanimous show of hands, and by 105 Chambers to 41, a strong resolution in favour of Imperial Preference, proposed by Mr. G. E. Drummond of Montreal. All looked well for the prospects of the campaign. But the toil of the last three years, culminating in the election, had been too much even for Mr. Chamberlain's astounding vitality. The stoutest bow must snap at last, and immediately after the birthday celebrations Mr. Chamberlain

was prostrated by a stroke. He realized the seriousness of his condition at once. His one anxiety was whether the Tariff Reform movement would go on by itself. The League had a keen chairman in Lord Ridley, who had recently succeeded Mr. Pearson, but there was no one either of sufficient authority or of sufficient power of speech to fill his own place. The sudden sense of loss might paralyze its activities, and renew the futile hesitations in the party. He decided, in consultation with Mrs. Chamberlain, to treat his illness as a minor indisposition. If he should recover in a reasonably short time, as then still seemed possible, all would be well; if not, then at any rate the fact might not become generally known till the movement had thoroughly found its own feet. And so it was many months before the public gradually realized that the great personality which had dominated English and Imperial politics for so many years could no longer exercise its magic power, and had become a mere watcher of the changing scene.

The subsequent history of the Tariff Reform movement need only be touched upon in barest outline. For the next three years the movement gained steadily. The Imperial Conference of 1907, bringing into strongest contrast the amazing eloquence and intellectual force

of Mr. Deakin, and the shrewd common sense of Dr. Jameson, with the dry pedantry of Mr. Asquith and the insolence of Mr. Churchill, provoked a strong reaction against the Liberal Government. With rising food prices, and with the severe industrial depression which followed the American crisis later in the year, the Protectionist side of the Tariff Reform movement received an immense impetus. From the mere revenue point of view it seemed as if a broadening of the basis of taxation would soon be inevitable. In 1908 the movement was at the height of its popularity. The whole Unionist Party were solid and enthusiastic, and even Mr. Balfour adopted a more positive and actively interested attitude. In 1909 came Mr. Lloyd - George's daring counter-stroke. The Budget of 1909 was in substance a mere overloading of existing direct and indirect taxes. But it was coupled for electioneering purposes with certain land taxes, which, trumpery and ridiculous in themselves, formed an admirable instrument both for working up class hatred and for precipitating a struggle between the two Houses of Parliament.

As the new crisis, thus skilfully engineered, developed, the Unionist Party allowed themselves more and more to fall back on the



defensive, and to relegate their positive and constructive policy to the background. In January 1910 the Unionists won one hundred seats, mainly on Tariff Reform. In December Mr. Balfour, in the hope of rallying Free Traders to the constitution, undertook to submit Tariff Reform to a referendum. The constitutional crisis, the Insurance Act, and Home Rule dominated the years from 1911 onwards. The announcement of Sir W. Laurier's policy of reciprocity with the United States early in 1911 gave occasion to many weak-kneed Unionists to treat Imperial Preference as practically a lost cause. The smashing defeat of reciprocity by the Canadian electorate in September, and the succession of Mr. Bonar Law to the Unionist leadership seemed, however, to have precluded all possibility of hesitation in the future. But during the autumn of 1912 the old unfortunate spirit of timidity about the "food taxes" began to revive again, and towards the end of the year a veritable panic was engineered by the Press and by some of the constitutionally unsteady elements in the party. Mr. Bonar Law was unable to control the stampede, and before the Unionist Party could wake up from its aberration, it found itself precluded from imposing duties on food,

whether for Preference or for agricultural protection, as the result of the next election, and committed to a second election before it could carry its first constructive policy into real effect.

During all these weary years of delay Mr. Chamberlain could, in the main, only follow the course of events as a keenly interested spectator. In the affairs of the Tariff Reform League, as in those of the Liberal Unionist Party, his opinion and advice were still frequently sought. But the only public utterances he was able to make consisted in brief notes of exhortation and encouragement to staunch Tariff Reformers taking part in an election, or to the initiators of any movement for the furtherance of his policy. The only occasion on which he attempted anything further was in the summer of 1911, when he wrote a preface to Archdeacon Cunningham's "Case Against Free Trade," in which he restated in eloquent terms the main Imperial arguments from which his whole campaign first set out. A few sentences from this preface may well be quoted here :—

“The future of the Empire lies henceforward, not in its power to annex new territories, but in its capacity to unite existing

dominions and develop existing resources .....It is a commonplace of political study that the territorial expansion of the Empire was in the main a haphazard affair..... We have been, on the whole, wonderfully fortunate, but we cannot trust for ever to good luck. Success breeds envy ; jealous eyes watch our progress, measure our strength or weakness, and seek out the joints of our armour. We are great in territory, strong in numbers, and rich in vast but undeveloped resources. But our union is of the slightest, and our development has scarcely begun. Are they also to be left to chance ? Are they also to be the blind sport of forces which we but dimly understand and do not seek to control ? Or is an effort to be made to find, and having found to pursue, a common policy by which the development of each may be made to serve the interests of the whole, and the strength of the whole to safeguard and promote the development of each ?

“ This is the Imperial problem of to-day. Conference after conference meets to discuss it, yet how little real progress is made ! Is it not worth while to pause and ask

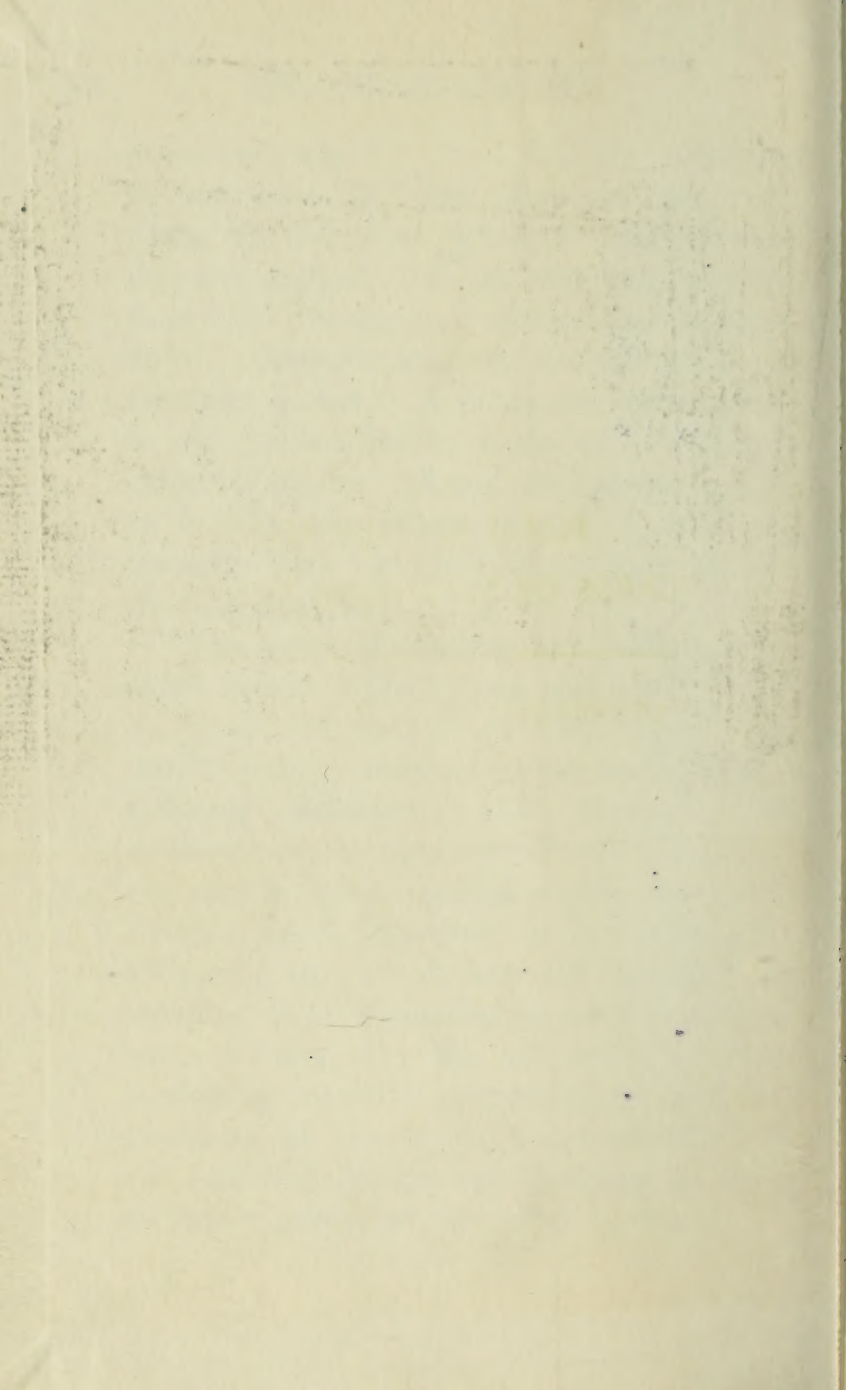
ourselves why? 'We call our kinsmen to our councils,' but when we get them there we refuse to listen to their advice. On one subject and on one subject only they have throughout spoken with a single voice. Common interests are the pledge of common action. A common trade policy is the indispensable basis of a common Imperial policy. Again and again, openly or tacitly, the rulers of the Empire are brought back by their discussions to this fundamental fact.

"The great dominions are willing; we alone refuse. They open the door to us; in return we slam it in their faces. An insular policy, adopted by us under totally different conditions both economic and political, at a time when our industrial supremacy was unchallenged, and the Empire itself regarded as a burdensome obligation to be shaken off as soon as possible, is still pleaded as an insuperable bar now that we are subjected to ever-increasing economic competition; and the greatness of the opportunity afforded by our Imperial position is, in words at least, an idea common to men of all parties."

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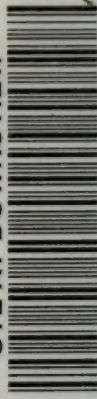
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